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**‘And I Saw That the Delicacies Were Many’:  
A Commentary on Food and Eating in the Book of Tobit**

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Naomi S. Jacobs

Ph.D. Thesis Submitted to Durham University, Department of Theology and Religion

2007



- 8 AUG 2007

## Abstract

The role of food in its consumption in literature is well recognised in a number of fields, but is just beginning to play a role in the study of ancient Jewish and Christian writings. Although the Book of Tobit contains some three dozen references to food and drink, there has until now been no full-length study of the phenomenon. Most of the time, when food is mentioned in Tobit, it is in connection with the dietary laws, an area along with a few other topics such as fasting, Passover, and commensality that are the primary focus of scholarship of food in Judaism. This dissertation reveals that the role of food in the Book Tobit is much deeper and more complex. Ubiquitous and highly varied, food is essential to the telling of the story. This includes not only its three major meals/celebrations, but a whole range of activities including food preparation, the gift of food to others, and a variety of ways in which food is not consumed. Unlike well-known themes such as endogamy, burial of the dead, and almsgiving that are the mainstays of commentary work on Tobit, food's varied appearance allows it to play a supporting role of the major themes of the unit in which it appears. It is crucial to illustrating Tobit's righteous behaviour in the opening chapter, for instance, just as much as it is critical to evoking the dark, liminal backdrop for Tobiah's combat with a hungry large fish in chapter 6. In addition to illuminating how food is integral to the story, this study raises broader questions about the composition of Tobit in general as well as the role of food in ancient narrative.



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## Acknowledgements

‘I believe in Angels’ -- ABBA

It was over pizza to commemorate the end of Passover that a Christian friend first introduced me to the Book of Tobit, mimicking, perhaps, the re-transmission of Tobit from Christians to Jews in pre-Modern times. Somewhat later, in a refectory, over apple juice and decaffeinated coffee, John Strugnell guided me through Sinaiticus Tobit. His generosity and many insightful observations were invaluable in getting me started on my journey with Tobit; his love of the story has become my own.

In Tob. 12, Raphael repeatedly urges that God be praised. Likewise, all doctoral students are required to praise their supervisors in the acknowledgements section. In this case, however, it is no matter of lip service. The problem here is that words are simply lacking to express my appreciation for all that my *Doktorvater* has done for me along the long journey of this study and throughout my time at Durham. From day one, he has been an endless source of enthusiasm, wisdom and constructive criticism. Remarkably, in this age of the British RAE, he takes the guidance of his students to be just as important as his own research. I cannot praise Loren T. Stuckenbruck enough not only for helping me with this study but for serving as an ideal role model for a mentor. I would also like to thank Lois Stuckenbruck for the many things she has done behind the scenes, including the times she took off from work to pick up children so that her husband could meet with me. I thank Stuart Weeks and Robert Hayward for their generous support and help, Douglas Davies for consultation on anthropological matters, and Stephen Barton for sharing his collection of articles pertaining to food in antiquity. Many thanks also to Diana and John Barclay, Meta and Jimmy Dunn, and Andrena and Bill Telford and others associated with the department staff, especially our wonderful secretaries Ellen Middleton and Anne Parker, for encouragement and friendliness.

I also thank my students, from whom I am constantly learning, especially those in ‘Seers and Sages,’ where we had the privilege of looking at Tobit together.

I am grateful to those who have shared their thoughts on my project as it developed: Lawrence Wills, Mitzi Smith, Maxine Grossman, Hayim Lapin, Jeremy Corely, and Halvor Moxnes. A special thank you to my friends and colleagues who have read and massively improved the thesis: Elizabeth Evershed, Martin Gidron, Stuart G. Jones (who persisted in making valuable comments despite physical injury!), and Benjamin G. Wold. All errors, of course, remain my own responsibility. Thanks also to Robert Littman for showing me a prepublication copy of his Tobit commentary and David Freidenreich for letting me see a prepublication copy of his dissertation on foreign food.

My family and friends know how much this dissertation means to me. I thank them for their love and support: parents Abby and Verne Jacobs, sister Aviva, who was the one to suggest I research food, my living grandfather, Charles Jacobs, as well as my other grandparents, Florence Jacobs, and Anne and Hertsell Conway, my aunt Roz Conway, uncles Oren Conway and Steve Jacobs, and cousins, friends and colleagues not previously mentioned: Eliyana Adler, Iyad Al-Agha, Kenneth Aktinson, Cynthia Avis, Laura Brenneman, Shannon Burkes, Augustine Casiday, Vanda Cohen, Angela Costley, Maya Das, Juith Fain, Becky Feldman, James N. Ford, Leah Gold, Mara Greengrass, Naomi Greengrass, Ben Holdsworth, Amy Huberman, Samer Hanna, Vivian Johnson, Joel Kaminsky, Ranja Knobl, Jeremy Korr, Hilary Lipka, Julia Littleton, Joel Lohr, Flory Tomutsa Malloy, Leslie Morrell-Norwood, Rachel Massey, Rosalyn Murphy, Hindy Najman, Elena Narinskiya, Aarti Nayadu, Michelle Pent, Giselle Ramparsad, Sara Ravid and Lauren Smith, Annette Yoshiko Reed, Matthew Scott, Wenhua Shi, Olga Skylar, Michelle Taylor, Valerie Thayer, David Wagschal, Cana Werman, Nia Williams, Julie Woods and Chris and Sasha Wyckoff. I am also grateful to Marjorie

Bewley and especially Beverly Evans, for a service which they alone could render.

Special mention is in order for Rabbi Daniel 'Danny' Leifer of the University of Chicago Hillel, who left us far too early. I also thank two teachers from my high school days who taught me most of what I know about the study of history and literature: Carole Powers and Gill Cook, as well as Bracha Ravin, my first Hebrew Bible teacher. I am also very much in debt to Elizabeth Beckwith, who taught me Latin in junior high and to Leonard Muellner and Stamatia Dova who improved my Greek significantly. I am grateful as well to all my other teachers at every stage of my education, including those who may have, inadvertently, taught me some important life lessons and enabled me to become a better scholar, a better teacher, and a better human being.

I am grateful to the various libraries and library staff who helped me with my research: Durham University Library (especially the ILL service), University of Maryland, College Park, Catholic University, Georgetown University, George Washington University, the Bodleian Library, the British Library, and especially the Theologicum at Karls Eberhard Universität Tübingen. I would also like to praise two fantastic websites which helped my research tremendously: Perseus of Tufts University and the Comprehensive Aramaic Website (CAL) of Hebrew Union College.

Many thanks also to the British government for granting me an ORSAS scholarship, for my department for supplying me with other scholarships, and for my first college, Ustinov, for granting me a travel award to go to Hungary to present at and attend a Tobit conference. I also thank my second college, Hatfield, for the meals I partook of as the project reached the 'quickenning point.'

This study is built upon a long tradition of the study of food in literature. It is also built upon the labour of generations of scholars who have puzzled over Tobit's many difficulties, illuminated its beauties, and have provided new and stimulating insights. To all those who have gone before, past and present: may wine (or possibly bread; see Chapter Four) always be poured on your graves.

Finally, Tobit suggests that we may be guided by angels when we least suspect it. I owe much to a certain angel disguised as a human being, and as a compatriot no less. You know who you are, and I cannot thank you enough for your unceasing support and for the many times you have given me opportunities for my academic career to flourish. My deepest gratitude to you, John Collins. I hope you find that your faith in me has been rewarded.



## List of Abbreviations and Sigla

√	root (for Semitic words)
1Q, 2Q, etc.	Qumran Cave Numbers followed by number
ÄA	Ägyptologische Abhandlungen
AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	The Anchor Bible Dictionary
Abr.	Philo, On the Life of Abraham
AfO	Archiv für Orientforschung
Agr.	De agricultura (On Agriculture)
AHw	W. von Soden, Akkadisches Handwörterbuch (Wiesbaden 1959 - 1981)
A. J.	Antiquitates judaicae (Jewish Antiquities)
AJP	American Journal of Philology
AJSLL	The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures
APOT	The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English
Asen.	Asenath
ASOR	American Schools of Oriental Research
ASTI	Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute
Aug	Augustinianum
Avod. Zar.	Avodah Zarah
b.	Babylonian Talmud/Bavli (when before rabbinic writings)
BAR	British Archaeological Reports
BASOR	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
Bar.	Baruch
BAM	Die babylonisch-assyrische Medizin in Texten und Untersuchungen
B. Bat.	Baba Batra
B. Metzi'a	Baba Metzi'a
B.C.E.	Before Common Era
BDAG	Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Other Early Christian Literature, 3rd. Edition
Ber.	Berakhot
Bib	Biblica
B.J.	Bellum judaicum (Jewish War)
BK	Bibel und Kirche
BM	La Biblia de Montserrat
BMJ	British Medical Journal
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft

CAL	Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
C.E.	Common Era
CEJL	Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature
cf.	Compare
Chr.	Chronicles
CIS	Corpus Inscriptionum Semicarum
CMG	Corpus Medicorum Graecorum
Col.	Colossians
Cor.	Corinthians
Contempl.	De vita contemplativa (On the Contemplative Life)
CRINT	Compendia rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
CUASST	Catholic University of America Studies in Sacred Theology
Deut.	Deuteronomy
diss.	dissertation
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
DSD	Dead Sea Discoveries
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
Ebers	Egyptian Ebers Papyrus
<i>Ebr.</i>	De Ebrietate (On Drunkenness)
ed.	editor
e.g.	for example
EHAT	Exegetisches Handbuch Zum Alten Testament
EM	Enzyklopädie des Märchens: Handwörterbuch zur historischen und vergleichenden Erzählforschung
En.	Enoch
Eph.	Ephesians
ER	The Encyclopedia of Religion
Eruv.	Eruvin
Esd.	Esdras
esp.	especially
Esth	Esther
et al.	and others
Ex.	Exodus
Ezek.	Ezekiel
Ezek. Trag.	Ezekiel the Tragedian
Flac.	In Flaccum (Against Flaccus).
G1	The Greek version esp. represented by Vaticanus and Alexandrinus
G2	The Greek version represented by Sinaiticus and MS 319

G3	The Greek version esp. represented by Ferrara 187 I and 188 I
Gal.	Galatians
Gen.	Genesis
Git.	Gittin
GKC	Gesenius Kautzsch Cowley
Gos. Thom.	Gospel of Thomas
Hal.	Hallah
HALOT	Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament
Hos.	Hosea
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
Hul.	Hullin
IDB	Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible
Isa.	Isaiah
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
Jastrow	Marcus Jastrow, A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli, and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature
JBA	Michael Sokoloff, A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods.
JBC	The Jerome Biblical Commentary
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
Jdt.	Judith
Jer.	Jeremiah
JJS	Journal of Jewish Studies
JNTSS	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
Josh.	Joshua
JPA	Michael Sokoloff, A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period.
JQR	Jewish Quarterly Review
JNES	Journal of Near Eastern Studies
JSJ	Journal for the Study of Judaism
JSHRZ	Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistischer und römischer Zeit
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSOPSup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSP	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha
JQR	Jewish Quarterly Review
Jub.	Jubilees
Judg.	Judges
JWSP	Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period
KAI	<u>Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften, 3 vols., ed. H. Donner and W. Röllig</u>

KEHAT	Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zu den Apokryphen des Alten Testamentes
Ker.	Keritot
Ketub.	Ketubbot
Kgs.	Kings
KTU	Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit
LCit	Latin citation
Let. Aris.	Letter of Aristeas
Lev.	Leviticus
Lewis and Short	Charlton Thomas Lewis, Charles Short, and Wilhelm Freund, <i>A Latin Dictionary</i>
lit.	literally
L.A.B.	Liber antiquitatum biblicarum (Pseudo-Philo)
Lam.	Lamentations
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LSJ	Liddell, Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i>
LSTS	Library of Second Temple Studies
LXX	Septuagint (Greek translation of the Torah)
m.	Mishnah (before rabbinic writings)
Ma'as.	Ma'aserot
Ma'as. Sh	Ma'aser. Sheni
Macc.	Maccabees
Mal.	Malachi
Mart. Ascen. Isa.	Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah
Matt.	Matthew
Meg.	Megillah
Mic.	Micah
MS	manuscript
n	note
Ned.	Nedarim
Neg.	Nega'im
Neh.	Nehemiah
NETS	New English Translation of the Septuagint
NIB	New Interpreter's Bible
NJBC	The New Jerome Biblical Commentary
NJPS	New Jewish Publication Society Translation ( <i>Tanakh</i> )
no.	number
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
Num.	Numbers
OG	Old Greek

OLD	Oxford Latin Dictionary
Or.	Orlah
OTP	Old Testament Pseudepigrapha
p.	page
Pesah.	Pesahim
Plant.	De plantatione (On Planting)
Prov.	Proverbs
Ps.	Psalms
Qoh.	Qohelet
Rab.	Rabbah (plus Biblical book)
RB	Revue biblique
RevQ	Revue de Qumrân
RHPR	Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses
Rom.	Romans
S	Sinaiticus
Sam.	Samuel
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SBLDS	SBL Dissertation Series
SIG	Wilhelm Dittenberg, Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum
Sir.	Ben Sira
SJSHRZ	Studien zu den Jüdischen Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit I
Shabb.	Shabbat
Shev.	Shevi'it
Shevu.	Shevu'ot
Spec.	De specialibus legibus (On the Special Laws)
t.	Tosefta (when before rabbinic writings)
T.Iss.	Testament of Issachar
T. Jud.	Testament of Judah
T. Reu.	Testament of Reuben
T. Sol	Testament of Solomon
T. Zeb.	Testament of Zebulun
T-S	Taylor-Schechter
Ta'an.	Ta'anit
TADAE	Bezalel Porten and Ada Yardeni, Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt
Tg	Targum
TgJ	Targum Jonathan
TgN	Targum Neofiti
TgPs-J	Targum Pseudo-Jonathan
Tob.	Tobit

TS	Temple Scroll
Virt.	De virtutibus (On the Virtues)
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
Wis.	Wisdom of Solomon
y.	Jerusalem/Palestinian Talmud/Yerushalmi (when before rabbinic writings)
Yad.	Yadayim
ZAW	Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
Zev.	Zevahim
Zech.	Zechariah
ZWT	Zeitschrift für wissenschaftlich Theologie

## Chapter One: Introduction

Food has it over sex for variety. Hedonistically, gustatory possibilities are much broader than copulatory ones. Literarily, reading about food is more interesting than reading about sex. The authors of *The Physiology of Taste* and of *Histoire d'O*, for example, are writers equally obsessed, but how charming is Brillat-Savarin's obsession, how sickening Reage's! Similarly, how delightful it is to hear someone describe a magnificent meal, or comical to hear a botched one described, whereas listening to the same person describe a seduction is almost invariably boring, if not repulsive. Perhaps the reason for this is that eating is the more social function, sex the more personal, and as such eating shows people in a greater multiplicity of poses, moods, and characters than does sex. Modern psychologists to the contrary, there is more going on at the table than in bed.<sup>1</sup>

### A. Food in Tobit: An Overture

Although the merit of the above claims may be debated, the author who developed them might have had in mind some version of that delightful work of ancient Jewish fiction, the Book of Tobit. For in Tobit, the only on-scene sex act, even when it follows the banishment of a demon, is a proud contender for Most Boring Wedding Consummation in Literary History.<sup>2</sup> Its seven off-scene attempts at heterosexual lovemaking, moreover, betray a definite lack of variety, ending as they all do with the death of the male partner. In contrast, references to food and its consumption in Tobit are ubiquitous, frequently fascinating, and of great variety. In some three dozen verses, which occur in all but three of the book's fourteen

- 
1. Joseph Epstein, *Familiar Territory: Observations on American Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979) 180-181.
  2. Cf. Lawrence M. Wills, *The Jewish Novel in the Ancient World* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1995), 79, who compares Sarah and Tobiah's wedding night with that in Xenophon's *Ephesian Tales* 1.9.



chapters, food is linked to the earthly and the supernatural, female and male, slave and free, old and young, human and beast.<sup>3</sup> It is caught, slaughtered, prepared, distributed, received, delayed, avoided, and consumed. It is eaten indoors and outdoors, with and without guests, and on both small and large scale. The categories that some scholars have used in analysing Tobit such as 'religious life' versus 'family life' simply collapse when one examines food, which can be either religious or familial, or even both at the same time.<sup>4</sup>

The subject of food in Tobit has been virtually ignored for many years. To be sure, scholars have perceived certain patterns regarding topics such as giving food to the hungry,<sup>5</sup> hospitality,<sup>6</sup> and banqueting,<sup>7</sup> but not within any unified scheme in which food itself is the focus. Interest in this topic has recently begun to grow, however. Amy-Jill Levine identifies food as particularly important to Tobit since it is both critical to the story's structure and an essential part of its thought-world or symbolic universe.<sup>8</sup> These insights, however, are not fully developed in Levine's work, as the focus of her interests is elsewhere. Nathan

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3. 1:6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 17; 2:2, 4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 13; 4:13, 15, 16, 17; 6:2, 6; 7:9, 10, 11, 14; 8:1, 19, 20; 9:6; 10:7; 11:19; and 12:1, 8, 9, 13, 19. One may also include bird droppings and fish organs in 2:10; 6:3, 8, 9, 17, 18; 8:2, 3; 11:4, 8, 11. The material in chapter 4, 10:7, 11:19, and 12:8, is absent in S.

4. These categories are employed in Beverly Bow, and George W. E. Nickelsburg, "Patriarchy with a Twist : Men and Women in Tobit," in *"Women Like This": New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World*, (ed. A.-J. Levine; Early Judaism and Its Literature 1; Atlanta: Scholars, 1991), 127-43.

5. Hermann Bückers, *Die Bücher Esdras, Nehemias, Tobias, Judith und Esther* (Herders Bibelkommentar 4/2; Freiburg: Herder, 1953), 210.

6. Demetrius R. Dumm, "Tobit (Tobias) Book of," *JBC*, 623.

7. Carey A. Moore, *Tobit: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 40A; New York: Doubleday, 1996), 246.

8. Amy-Jill Levine, "Diaspora as Metaphor: Bodies and Boundaries in the Book of Tobit," in *Diaspora Jews and Judaism: Essays in Honor of, and in Dialogue with A. Thomas Kraabel*, (ed. J. A. Overman and R. S. McNamara; South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism 41; Atlanta: Scholars, 1992), 105-17, 115 and 105.



MacDonald has also written on the subject of food in Tobit (as well as in Esther, Daniel, and Judith). He examines it with reference to a Jewish move against excess and from the humorous confluence of food, sex, and death.<sup>9</sup> MacDonald has also made an important contribution to the debate over the controversial instructions to perform a graveside offering in Tob. 4:17.<sup>10</sup> Although MacDonald has clearly made much-needed progress in directing attention to the roles of food in Tobit, his work remains preliminary and does not fully negotiate the multiple difficulties of text, redaction, and more that are involved in an analysis of Tobit. This is the first full length study on food in Tobit. Written in the form of a commentary, it not only examines every food-related reference, but takes into account all the various factors that must be considered when working with Tobit traditions. Thus, although this work is especially concerned with the types of food references in the narrative and the roles they play in telling the story, all matters pertaining to translation, text criticism, redaction criticism, possible allusions/echoes and background relevant to the cultural context are thoroughly examined.

## B. Study of Food in Literature, Biblical Writings, and in Judaism

The modern literary study of food in both ancient and modern literature has proved to be a fruitful and illuminating line of inquiry. The theme of food and eating has been identified in anything from Greek Epic to works by François Rabelais, Jane Austen, Virginia Woolf,

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9. Nathan MacDonald, "Food and Drink in Tobit and Other 'Diaspora Novellas'," in *Studies in the Book of Tobit: A Multidisciplinary Approach*. (M. R. J. Bredin, ed. LSTS 55; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2006), 165-178.

10. Nathan MacDonald, "'Bread on the Grave of the Righteous' (Tob. 4.17)," in *Studies in the Book of Tobit: A Multidisciplinary Approach*. (M. R. J. Bredin, ed. LSTS 55; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2006), 99-103.

James Joyce, and J. R. R. Tolkien.<sup>11</sup> Food, so basic to life, so readily symbolic, offers a unique and valuable window on culture, sociology, psychology and history, even as it performs a host of functions within the text itself.<sup>12</sup> An awareness of the potential benefits of examining food and eating in biblical writings and other sacred Jewish and Christian documents is emerging. As recently as 1999, *Semeia*, which describes itself as ‘an experimental journal devoted to the exploration of new and emergent areas and methods of biblical criticism’, dedicated a volume to ‘Food and Drink in the Biblical Worlds.’<sup>13</sup> The wide range of topics and methods in this volume are to be expected in a developing field. There and elsewhere, food and its consumption have been understood to fill many functions — for instance, as a potentially key element of narrative structure,<sup>14</sup> a system of signs yielding information about gender roles,<sup>15</sup> a central motif symbolising salvation,<sup>16</sup> and the ultimate embodiment of Torah.<sup>17</sup> Particular mention should be made of the study of food in prophetic literature by Robert Carroll which illustrates the multi-dimensional and messy nature of the topic.<sup>18</sup> Worth noting also are the analyses of banquets in the Book of Esther, which

- 
11. See the extensive Norman Kiell, *Food and Drink in Literature: A Selectively Annotated Bibliography* (London: Scarecrow Press, 1995), *passim*.
  12. Biasin Gian-Paolo, *Flavors of Modernity: Food and the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 11-20.
  13. A. Brenner, and J. W. van Henten (eds.), *Food and Drink in the Biblical Worlds* (Semeia 86; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999).
  14. Diane M. Sharon, *Patterns of Destiny: Narrative Structures of Foundation and Doom in the Hebrew Bible* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns 2002.); Deborah A. Appler, "From Queen to Cuisine: Food Imagery in the Jezebel Narrative," *Semeia* 86: 55-71.
  15. Brenner, "The Food of Love: Gendered Food and Food Imagery," *Semeia* 86: 101-112; Judith McKinlay, "To Eat or Not to Eat: Where is Wisdom in this Choice?" *Semeia* 86: 73-84 also considers the treatment of the female as a food provider.
  16. Jane S. Webster, *Ingesting Jesus: Eating and Drinking in the Gospel of John* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003).
  17. Gillian Feeley-Harnik, *The Lord's Table: The Meaning of Food in Early Judaism and Christianity* (rev. and enl. ed.; Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994).
  18. Robert P. Carroll, "YHWH's Sour Grapes: Images of Food and Drink in the Prophetic

recognise their role both in structuring the narrative and as being a locus for key events.<sup>19</sup>

More recently, Ken Stone's analyses of food and sex in the Hebrew Bible employing queer theory have yielded rich and compelling readings.<sup>20</sup>

In contrast, food has been addressed in only a limited way in the scholarly literature on Judaism.<sup>21</sup> Briefly stated, greater emphasis has been placed upon dietary regulations and commensality (especially in studies of the Dead Sea documents<sup>22</sup> and the Pharisees), with some interest directed towards specialised meals such as Passover, and to a lesser extent, fasting.<sup>23</sup> Strikingly, anthropologist Gillian Feeley-Harnik, who has produced the most extensive treatment of these topics, chooses to emphasise dietary regulations and commensality.<sup>24</sup> Her discussion of the Book of Tobit is particularly telling; she pays attention only to Tobit's observance of the dietary regulations.<sup>25</sup>

### C. Why Study the Book of Tobit?

Given that there have already been studies of food in various Jewish and Christian sacred

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Discourses of the Hebrew Bible," *Semeia* 86, 113-31.

19. E.g. Adele Berlin, *Esther: the Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2001), xxv.

20. Ken Stone, *Practicing Safer Texts: Food, Sex and Bible in Queer Perspective* (London: T&T Clark, 2005).

21. Cf. Nathan MacDonald, "Food and Drink," 166-67.

22. Philip R. Davies, "Food, Drink and Sects: the Question of Ingestion in the Qumran Texts," *Semeia* 86: 151-63.

23. Recently, for instance, Veronika Grimm, *From Feasting to Fasting, the Evolution of a Sin: Attitudes to Food in Late Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1996), 20-33; and Grimm, "Fasting Women in Judaism and Christianity in Late Antiquity," in *Food in Antiquity*, (ed. John Wilkins, David Harvey, and Mike Dobson; Exeter: Exeter University Press 1995), 225-40, esp. 225-230.

24. Feeley-Harnik, *The Lord's Table*, 7-17; 72.

25. Feeley-Harnik, *The Lord's Table*, 97 and 101.

writings, why choose Tobit? It has been noted above that food is both ever-present and highly variegated throughout the story. Also, Tobit is still relatively understudied, so any further work has the potential to be illuminating. Furthermore, with its mix of multiple genres and combination of Jewish and non-Jewish elements, the Book of Tobit can help us understand a whole range of aspects of ancient Judaism and the wider world in which it existed. These include but are not limited to: medicine; angelology and demonology; prayer; ancient storytelling; wisdom (including testaments); theodicy; use of the Torah and other sacred writings; the concept of the Book of Moses; the phrase ‘Lord of heaven’; women, slaves and children in the household (including women at work); almsgiving; burial of the dead; endogamy; sex without lust; tithing; Gentile food; and weddings and wedding contracts. Tobit shares certain traditions with *Jubilees*<sup>26</sup> and holds some perspectives in common with Ben Sira.<sup>27</sup> The book also displays awareness of the potential for angels to become entangled with human women, a theme which was explored in early Enoch tradition in the *Book of Watchers*.<sup>28</sup> It also shares liturgical traditions found in other texts.<sup>29</sup> Many of these topics and more may be better apprehended by means of a focus upon food and its consumption. They may also shed light upon other ancient sacred Jewish writings.

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26. Merten Rabenau, *Studien zum Buch Tobit* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1994), 158-160.

27. See Chapter Four.

28. See Chapter Seven; George W. E. Nickelsburg, “Tobit and Enoch: Distant Cousins with a Recognizable Resemblance,” *SBLSP* (1988), 54-68 argues for an even closer connection.

29. In addition to the material noted by Patrick J. Griffin, “The Theology and Function of Prayer in the Book of Tobit” (Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of America, 1982), Tob. 11:14-15 is similar to lines 4-6 of 11Q14 (11QSeferMilchamah/Berakhot). See further Loren T. Stuckenbruck, “‘Angels’ and ‘God’: Exploring the Limits of Early Jewish Monotheism”, in ed. Wendy E. S. North and Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *Early Jewish and Christian Monotheism* (Early Christianity in Context; JSNTSS 263; London: T & T Clark International, 2004), 45-70.

## D. Necessary Background for the Study of Tobit

Having shown why a study of food in Tobit is a worthwhile endeavour, it is necessary to provide some essential background information to best appreciate the factors that must be considered when interpreting the story. These include the complexities of the textual situation, the importance of the story's use of literary sources, the disputed question of redaction, and the problems with assigning a firm date or provenance to the document. Each of these issues has been the subject of debate for some time. With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, some questions have been resolved, yet others remain widely debated.

### 1. The Texts of Tobit

We do not know everything about the complicated way in which the various versions of the Book of Tobit were transmitted. The general contour of the passage of Tobit from language to language is nevertheless observable, and it is possible to place various versions into particular 'families'. Most critically, the finding of six fragmentary manuscripts among the Dead Sea Scrolls, five in Aramaic and one in Hebrew, has resolved some debates.<sup>30</sup> It is now

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30. 4Q196 (4QpapTobit<sup>a</sup> ar), 4Q197-199 (4QTobit<sup>b-d</sup> ar), and 4Q200 (4QTobit<sup>e</sup>). Readings of these manuscripts are available in Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "Tobit," *Qumran Cave 4: XIV. Parabiblical Texts, Part 2*, (ed. M. Broshi et al al.; DJD 19; Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 1-76 (+Pls. I-X) and Klaus Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer samt den Inschriften aus Palästina, dem Testament Levis aus der Kairoer Genisa, der Fastenrolle und den alten talmudischen Zitaten* (Band 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 172-186. See Stuart Weeks, Simon J. Gathercole and Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *The Book of Tobit: Ancient and Medieval versions* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004 for corrected readings. See also the material available at the Comprehensive Aramaic Website (CAL) of Hebrew Union College <http://cal1.cn.huc.edu/>. 4Q196 includes parts of the following verses as numbered in Robert Hanhart, *Tobit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983): 1:17; 1:19-2:2, 2:3, 2:10-11, 3:5, 3:9-15, 3:17, 4:2, 4:5, 4:7, 4:21-5:1, 5:9, 6:6-7, 6:13-18, 6:18-7:5, 7:13, 12:1, 12:18-13:6, 13:6-12, 13:12-14:3, 14:7; 4Q197 has 3:6-8, 4:21-5:1, 5:12-14, 5:19-6:12, 6:12-18, 6:18-7:10, 8:17-9:4; Tobit<sup>c</sup> 4Q198 contains 14:2-6 and possibly 14:10; (4Q199) consists of 7:11

clear that the Book of Tobit was originally composed in a Semitic language. Whether that language is Aramaic or Hebrew as is debated is not as important to this study as the recognition that it was not first written in Greek.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, as will be discussed below, the Scrolls have also provided a *terminus ad quem*.

It is critical to stress that the DSS Tobit manuscripts are so fragmentary that scholars are not in agreement about some of the readings. Altogether they preserve not much more than 20% of the story,<sup>32</sup> and even so minor differences exist among the manuscripts.<sup>33</sup> The full story is only available in later translations that derive from a Semitic version of the text. To study Tobit properly it is necessary to consult a variety of these translations because even the readings of the DSS fragments are not fully preserved by any single version. At the very minimum, serious work on the story demands the use of three Greek text types<sup>34</sup> and a range of Old Latin manuscripts.<sup>35</sup> The origins of and relationship between these versions is beyond

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and 14:10; Tobit<sup>e</sup> 4Q200 has 3:6, 3:10-11, 4:3-9, 5:2, 10:7-9, 11:10-14, 12:20-13:4, 13:13-14, 13:18-14:2 and possibly 3:3-4, so Fitzmyer, DJD. These five manuscripts were discovered in the Judean Desert in 1952; the sixth, Schøyen ms. 5234 (containing part of Tob. 14:4) was initially thought to be part of 4Q196; for photo (but incorrect information) see <http://www.nb.no/baser/schoyen/5/5.9/index.html#5234> [cited 2 October 2006]; Michaela Hallermayer and Torleif Elgvin have written an article on the subject, scheduled for publication in RevQ 22/87 (2006).

31. Pace Paul Deselaers, *Das Buch Tobit: Studien zu seiner Entstehung, Komposition und Theologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 334.
32. Fitzmyer, "Aramaic and Hebrew Fragments," 658.
33. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Aramaic and Hebrew Fragments of Tobit from Qumran Cave 4," *CBQ* 57 (1995), 664-5.
34. Other Greek fragments also exist: Instituto Papirologico «G. Vitelli» di Firenze PSI inv. cap. 46 (unknown provenance dated to 220-250 C.E., part of 12:6-7, 8-11); Oxyrhynchus 1594 (Cambridge add. 6363; late third century C.E., 12:14a-19 with 17a largely missing); Oxyrhynchus 1076 (John Rylands Gk. P. 448; dated to the 6th century, 2:2-3, 4-5, 8) pointing to an even more complex development of Greek text traditions. See further Weeks, et al., *Book of Tobit*, 15-20.
35. The Old Latin materials not present in Weeks, et al., *The Book of Tobit*, were obtained

the scope of this study. Suffice it to say that the 4th century Sinaiticus codex and eleventh century minuscule 319 (3:6-6:16), both of which belong to Greek text type G2, along with Old Latin manuscripts, tend on the whole to agree best with the DSS. For this reason, whenever possible, this study will adhere to convention and use Sinaiticus as a basis.<sup>36</sup> It should be noted, however, that there are many instances in which the Greek text types known as G1 (codices Vaticanus (mid 4th century), Alexandrinus (5th century) and many other witnesses) and G3 (a version that follows G1 part of the time, but otherwise provides a different text type<sup>37</sup>) individually or collectively agree with the Scrolls where Sinaiticus does not.<sup>38</sup> G3 in particular has been largely ignored in much of the research although it has proven to preserve such ancient readings.<sup>39</sup>

Moreover, in addition to its own share of idiosyncratic scribal difficulties, Sinaiticus possesses two full-blown lacunae (4:6b-19b and 13:6-9) which 319, G1 and OL material

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directly from the editors.

36. Readings for S and most other documents are based on Weeks, et al., *Tobit*, with consultation of photographs of the respective manuscripts; Hanhart, *Tobit*, also consulted for the Greek, corrects some possible scribal errors in the main text rather than apparatus.

37. The most important G3 manuscripts are Ferrara 187 I (Holmes-Parsons 106, 14th century) and Ferrara 188 I (Holmes-Parsons 107). The unique portions of these manuscripts begin at 6:9 and extend nearly to the end of the book. See further, Stuart Weeks, "Some Neglected Texts of Tobit: The Third Greek Version," in *Studies in the Book of Tobit: A Multidisciplinary Approach*. (M. R. J. Bredin, ed. LSTS 55; London: T&T Clark, 2006), 12-42.

38. See data in Weeks, "Neglected Texts," 24-40.

39. For instance, aside from 319 and the Old Latin, G3 alone agrees in 6:12 with DSS material which states that Sarah's father loves her; S and G1 praise her father for being good.

must supplement.<sup>40</sup> One must be careful, however. G1 and G3, whatever their precise origin, clearly reflect considerable reworking of older material on a large scale; in addition, 319 has its own text critical problems. The nine OL manuscripts this study examines display considerable variety in both general characteristics and closeness to the DSS. The OL manuscripts studied include:<sup>41</sup>

Corbeiensis/ Sangermanensis 4	(822)
Regius	(9th century)
Sangermanensis 15	(early 9th century)
Reginensis	(9th century)
Monacensis	(8th/ 9th century) <sup>42</sup>
Bobbiensis	(mid-9th century)
Alcalà Bible	(9th/10th century) <sup>43</sup>
Biblia de Rosas	(mid 11th century)
Mazarine 257 <sup>44</sup>	(12th century or earlier)

In addition to the manuscripts, citations from three other sources are also examined: Cyprian (3rd century), Lucifer (4th century) and the possibly 5th century *Speculum*.<sup>45</sup> Of these Latin materials, most useful for the student of Tobit are Corbeiensis and Regius, that agree with

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40. Christian J. Wagner, *Polyglotte Tobit-Synopse: Griechisch, Lateinisch, Syrisch, Hebräisch, Aramäisch; mit einem Index zu den Tobit-Fragmenten vom Toten Meer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003) supplies 319 for 4:6b-19b, but with 'corrections' of possible scribal errors.
  41. Dating as listed in Weeks et al., *Book of Tobit*, 22-25; 53; Simon Gathercole, "Tobit in Spain," in *Studies in the Book of Tobit: A Multidisciplinary Approach*. (M. R. J. Bredin, ed. LSTS 55; London: T & T Clark, 2006, 6) offers slightly different dates, 55.
  42. On the problems with the current edition of Monacensis see Weeks et al., *Book of Tobit*, 51.
  43. Alcalà's expansiveness and the likelihood that it reflects more than one Latin and even a Greek manuscript have been noted by P.-M. Bogaert, "La Version Latine du Livre Judith dans la Première Bible 'Alcala'", *Revue Bénédictine* 78 (1968), 7, cited in Weeks et al., *Book of Tobit*, 24.
  44. Mazarine 257 exists as fragments attached to the binding of a manuscript (Weeks et al., *Book of Tobit*, 55).
  45. Weeks et al., *Book of Tobit*, 23-24.



Sinaiticus closely,<sup>46</sup> and Reginensis, a part of which (1:1-6:12) may derive from a lost and different Greek version, possibly related to G3.<sup>47</sup> At times, however, even these manuscripts have gaps or errors and others need to be consulted, keeping in mind the possibility that some may even reflect later influence from G1 and/or the Vulgate.

As well as the witnesses just mentioned, there are a number of other versions in a variety of languages. One of these, just noted above, is the Vulgate, which possesses many unique differences. Ultimately, however, the Vulgate is of small text-critical value, although it is potentially useful for insight into the inner psyche of Jerome of Stridon. Jerome's translation was based on an Old Latin text, and it is difficult to discern a 'Chaldee' (Aramaic) text behind it, as he claims.<sup>48</sup> The two text-types of the Syriac, however, are occasionally worth a look as they may offer a way (with all necessary linguistic caution) to speculate about lost portions of an Aramaic Tobit. The first, a 7th-8th century Syro-Hexaplaric MS 8f1, follows G1 until 7:11, whereas afterwards it clearly resembles the Third Greek, with some variation.<sup>49</sup> The second is found in a series of non-Peshitta, non-Hexaplaric manuscripts. For the most part these are exclusively G1 in text type, although one manuscript possesses independent notes correlating with G3.<sup>50</sup> In addition, the Syriac versions, along with a number of creatively modified Jewish retranslations from Greek and Latin that were made much later,

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46. Mazarine 257 fragments and Sangermanensis 15 are also close.

47. Weeks, "Some Neglected Texts," 23.

48. Aelred Cody, review of V. Skemp, *The Vulgate of Tobit Compared with Other Ancient Witnesses*, "CBQ" 65 (2003), 456; Skemp posits a genuine Aramaic Vorlage.

49. Cf. Weeks. et al., *Book of Tobit*, 47.

50. Jürgen C. H. Lebram, "Tobit," in *The Old Testament in Syriac According to the Peshitta Version, Part IV, fascicle 6: Canticles or Odes - Prayer of Manasseh - Apocryphal Psalms - Psalms of Solomon - Tobit -1 (3 Esdras)*, Leiden: Brill, 1972), iii.

can be of help when versions in those languages are ambiguous.<sup>51</sup> Tobit is also found in Coptic, Arabic, Armenian, and Ethiopic.<sup>52</sup>

## 2. Possible Sources for the Book of Tobit

In addition to an awareness of the complicated textual problems of Tobit, a recognition of the way the story makes use of other sources, both Jewish and non-Jewish, is important for understanding how the narrative operates. When it is clear that a particular element in the tale has a documentable pre-existence, one can discern the creativity involved in adopting it into the story. At the same time, knowing that a passage has a source may account for some of the constraints that the narrative may be working with.

Without a doubt Tobit draws upon a much older reserve of themes and motifs found in fairy tales.<sup>53</sup> Defeating monsters and winning brides and treasure are basic elements in such stories.<sup>54</sup> More specific features found in such tales may also be reflected in Tobit. This includes the motif known as 'The Grateful Dead,' in which someone who buries a corpse is

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51. Later Jewish versions include Cairo Geniza T-S A 45.26 (13th century); Constantinople 1516; Constantinople 1519; North French Miscellany (BM Add. 11639 (late 13th century); a version existing only as a copy of a manuscripts dated to 15th century (Codex Or. Gaster 28 of the British Library); 'Otsar Haqqodesh. Lemberg 1850/1; and the Bodleian Aramaic late 14th/15th century); see further Weeks, *Tobit*, 32-46.
  52. Meinrad M. Schumpp, *Das Buch Tobias übersetzt und erklärt* (EHAT 11; Münster: Aschendorff, 1933), XXV-XXVII. These agree largely with G1 with the exception of the Arabic which is closer to the Vulgate.
  53. Pamela J. Milne, "Folktales and Fairy Tales: An Evaluation of Two Proppian Analyses of Biblical Narratives," *JSOT* 34 (1986), 51, citing H. Jason and A. Kempinski, "How Old are Folktales?" *Fabula* 22 (1981), 21 (tale no.11).
  54. Dragonslaying is a very ancient motif (L. Röhrich, "Drache, Drachenkampf, Drachentöter," *EM* 3: 787-820); in one such story a dog is a helper (Frank Zimmermann, *The Book of Tobit* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), 8).

later helped by the dead person's ghost. In the Book of Tobit, the angel Raphael may be said to take the place of the ghost.<sup>55</sup> Often attached to this theme is another, the Monster in the Bridal Chamber or the Dangerous Bride (or Poisoned Maiden).<sup>56</sup> These tales concern a princess (like Sarah, whose name literally means 'princess') who has lost a series of husbands on her wedding night. With the aid of the helper, serpents from inside the princess's mouth are killed. The helper, in this case, Raphael, is offered half of what the hero acquires. Also of particular interest is the Turkish story 'The Blind Padishah with Three Sons,' in which a son goes on a quest to cure his father's blindness and ends up acquiring a wife.<sup>57</sup>

Even more obvious is the way the Book of Tobit makes use of a famous non-Jewish story involving a wise sage named Ahiqar. The ancient *Story and Wisdom of Ahiqar* is set in the courts of some of the same Assyrian rulers who appear in the Book of Tobit.<sup>58</sup> In the tale of *Ahiqar*, the wise Ahiqar is betrayed by Nadin, the nephew he has adopted, but Ahiqar ultimately prevails over Nadin's attempts to kill him. Following the story there is a series of sayings. Some of these have parallels in Tobit (see Chapter Four). Furthermore, the ups and

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55. Karl Simrock, *Der gute Gerhard und die dankbaren Todten: Ein Beitrag zur deutschen Mythologie und Sagenkunde* (Bonn: Marcus, 1856), 131-32.; Gordon Hall Gerould, *The Grateful Dead* (Publications of the Folklore Society; London: David Nutt, 1908) and Sven Lilljeblad, *Die Tobiasgeschichte und andere Märchen mit toten Helfern* (Lund: Lindsted, 1927).

56. Lilljeblad, *Die Tobiasgeschichte*, 124; the Egyptian Tractate on Khons, which Simpson (*APOT 1*: 187-188) argued that Tobit was written to counteract is just one example of such a theme.

57. Wills, *Jewish Novel*, 74-75.

58. For Aramaic from Elephantine: Bezalel Porten and Ada Yardeni, *TADAE 3*; Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1993), 24-57; for English and background, James M. Lindenberger, "Ahiqar: A New Translation and Introduction," *OTP 2*:479-507; for later versions, F. C. Conybeare et al., J. R. Harris, and A. S. Lewis, *The Story of Ahikar: from the Syriac, Arabic, Armenian, Ethiopic, Greek and Slavonic Versions* (London: C.J. Clay, 1898).

downs of this court tale, its courtly setting, words of wisdom, and first person narrative have all shaped the formation and development of Tobit.<sup>59</sup> As if that were not enough, an actual character named Ahikar appears five times in the Book of Tobit.<sup>60</sup> In the story he is both Tobit's nephew and an official who holds high administrative positions under various Assyrian rulers.<sup>61</sup> Ahikar's place in court enables him to help his uncle, speaking on his behalf when he gets into trouble from his persistent burials and supporting him for two years in his blindness (2:10). Ahikar also comes to celebrate with Tobit (11:18). Lastly Tobit holds him up as an example of how almsgiving saves one's life in his farewell speech to his son (14:10). Ahikar's nephew Nadin appears both as a fellow celebrant (11:18) and as he does in the *Story and Wisdom of Ahikar*, as someone who sought to destroy Ahikar (14:10)<sup>62</sup>.

Another non-Jewish writing that has been compared with Tobit is the *Odyssey*. Similarities between the Book of Tobit and especially the account of Odysseus's son Telemachus were first noted nearly a century ago and are currently receiving renewed attention.<sup>63</sup> Impoverished fathers with disturbed households, unhappy mothers who weave, only sons travelling with a heavenly helper in disguise, wedding feasts, the return of the sons, and the return of fortune

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59. Jonas C. Greenfield, "Ahikar in the Book of Tobit," in *De la Torah au Messie: Études d'exégèse et d'herméneutique bibliques offertes A Henri Cazelles*, (ed. J. Doré; Paris: Desclée, 1981), 329-36.

60. Tob. 1:21; 1:22; 2:10; 11:18; 14:10.

61. Tob. 1:21; 1:22.

62. Nadin's name is spelt differently and with some variety in G2.

63. Carl Fries, "Das Buch Tobit und die Telemachie," *ZWT* 53 (1911), 54-87; Dennis R. MacDonald, "Tobit and the Odyssey," in Dennis R. MacDonald, *Mimesis and Intertextuality in Antiquity and Christianity*, (ed. D. R. MacDonald; Harrisburg: Trinity, 2001) 1-40 and George W. E. Nickelsburg, "Tobit, Genesis, and the Odyssey: a Complex Web of Intertextuality," in *Mimesis and Intertextuality in Antiquity and Christianity*, 41-55.

are certainly present in both stories.<sup>64</sup> Parallels with the *Odyssey* have also long been evoked to account for the presence of the dog in the book of Tobit.<sup>65</sup> There are also several apparent parallels between the two works in the scenes in which food is present and eating takes place.<sup>66</sup> This study considers each of these purported parallels on a case by case basis, examining whether these could be due to an actual literary dependence (written or oral) or are more of the indirect sort that the Book of Tobit shares with the fairy tale motifs described above.

In contrast with comparison with the *Odyssey*, there is no doubt that the author(s) of the Book of Tobit made use of documents that were later to become part of the Hebrew Bible.<sup>67</sup> Tobit uses sacred writings in at least three ways. First of all, they are cited as a kind of general source for history, theology, and how to be an observant Jew. For example, Tobit clearly relies upon 2 Kings in chapter 1 because it preserves some of that document's historical errors (e.g. 2 Kings 17:1-6 and 18:9-13).<sup>68</sup> As to theology, the Book of Tobit takes the Deuteronomic view of God's system of reward and punishment.<sup>69</sup> To teach how to be

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64. Fries, "Das Buch Tobit und die Telemachie," 54-70. Nickelsburg, "Tobit, Genesis, and the Odyssey," 45, has pointed out that not every parallel works perfectly.

65. Thomas F. Glasson, "The Main Source of Tobit," *ZAW* 71 (1959), 277, cites Moses Rosenmann, *Studien zum Buche Tobit* (Berlin: Mayer and Müller, 1894).

66. Fries, "Das Buch Tobit und die Telemachie," 61; MacDonald, "Tobit and the Odyssey," 24-25, 27.

67. See Francesco Vattioni, "Studi e note sul libro di Tobia," *Augustinianum* 10 (1975), 262-63 for a listing of citations and allusions.

68. Moore, *Tobit*, 10.

69. Alexander A. Di Lella, "The Deuteronomic Background of the Farewell Discourse in Tob 14:3-11," *CBQ* 41 (1979), 380-89. Whether Tobit is actually using Deuteronomy as a source *per se* or is reflecting more general tendencies in Second Temple writings is a separate question.

observant Jews, the narrative has Tobit present a system of tithes and other offerings grounded in the Pentateuch (see Chapter Two).

The second way Tobit uses sacred writings, especially prophetic writings, is by means of direct or modified quotations. An example of this is the modified quotation from Amos 8:10 used by Tobit to comment on his circumstances (Tob. 2:6). Tobit also (G2) explicitly refers to Nahum (Tob. 14:4) and alludes to Micah 4:2 and Zechariah 8:22 (Tob. 13:11), Micah 5:4-5 and Zephaniah 2:13 (Tob. 14:4) and Isaiah 2:18 and Jeremiah 16:19 (Tob. 14:6). Other writings to which Tobit may allude include Proverbs and Psalms.<sup>70</sup>

The third and most interesting way Tobit uses sacred writings is by integrating material from various narratives into the behaviour of its own characters. Genesis is an especially important source in this regard.<sup>71</sup> Through many biblical echoes, Tobit evokes the age of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs as well as that of Noah (Tob. 4:12), a time in which marriage is endogamous, hospitality is generous, and angels travel in disguise. It even reaches back as far as Adam and Eve, whose union Tobiah invokes in his wedding night prayer (Tob. 8:6). Tobiah's journey is particularly modelled upon two stories involving the search for a wife: the story of Abraham's servant going in search of a wife for Isaac (Gen. 24) and to a lesser degree the story of Jacob (Gen. 29).<sup>72</sup> Other sources that have been noted include Judges and

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70. Irene Nowell, "The Book of Tobit: Narrative Technique and Theology" (Ph.D. diss. Catholic University of America, 1983), 276-82.

71. Noted early on by Israel Abrahams, "Tobit and Genesis," *JQR* 5 (1893), 348-50.

72. Lothar Ruppert, "Das Buch Tobias - Ein Modellfall nachgestaltender Erzählung," in *Wort, Lied und Gottesspruch: Beiträge zur Septuaginta Festschrift für Joseph Ziegler*; ed. Josef Schreiner; Forschung zur Bibel 1; Würzburg: Echter, 1972), 109-19. Nowell,

Job.<sup>73</sup> Both Job and Tobit deal with the problem of why the righteous suffer and both involve a sharp tongued wife;<sup>74</sup> even the main characters' names sound similar.

### 3. Questions of Redaction

In addition to concerns about text and sources, the extent to which Tobit has been redacted, if at all, remains an important issue to consider when performing exegesis. The answer to this question naturally affects how one is to both date the story and assign to it a provenance. Moreover, if the Book of Tobit is not a unity, this has a significant impact upon its exegesis. One may have difficulty in reading the story holistically, specifically in using another passage as an aid towards the interpretation of another. At the very least, one will be forced to confront the gaps and fissures that such a narrative presents and thus be prepared to consider that the story at times reflects a multiplicity of perspectives. This has a profound effect on how we understand Tobit as a whole. Consideration of redaction also has implications for the analysis of character in the story. Where there is tension, does one analyse the separate strands? Where redaction may be the source of repetition, is it fair to attribute this to character?<sup>75</sup>

Historically, concerns as to whether Tobit is the work of more than one author go as far back

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"Narrative Technique," 276-82 .

73. Alexander A. Di Lella, "The Book of Tobit and the Book of Judges: An Intertextual Analysis," *Henoch* 22 (2000), 197-206.

74. Nowell, "Narrative Technique," 74-75; Devorah Dimant, "Use and Interpretation of Mikra in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha," in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, (ed. M. J. Mulder, and H. Sysling; CRINT 2/1; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1990), 379-419, esp. 417-419.

75. We must also keep in mind that we need not assume that character and its development are always of importance in writings of this genre.

as the sixteenth century with Pellicanus, who thought chapters 13 (Tobit's Hymn of Praise) and 14 (Tobit's Prophetic Testament and Epilogue) were secondary.<sup>76</sup> In 1800, Karl D. Ilgen separated the third person account 3:7-12:22 from the first person account in 1:1-3:6 and also from chapter 13, which he dated nearly three hundred years later than the main body of the text.<sup>77</sup> In 1860, Ferdinand Hitzig provided the first sustained arguments that chapters 13 and 14 were secondary and has been followed by a number of scholars unto the present day.<sup>78</sup> Textual evidence weighs in on both sides: these two chapters are partially absent in some Jewish medieval manuscripts,<sup>79</sup> yet (more significantly) are represented to a small extent among the Dead Sea fragments.<sup>80</sup> Typical arguments for the secondary character of 13 and 14

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76. Gamberoni, *Die Auslegung*, 265.

77. Ilgen dated 1:1-3:6 to the seventh century B.C.E., 3:7-12:22 to around 280 B.C.E. and chapter 13 to about 10 B.C.E., as noted in Robert H. Pfeiffer, *History of New Testament Times, with an Introduction to the Apocrypha* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949), 276. Tobit's shift from first to third person has been held by some to be a sign of more than one hand, but the presence of this as a technique in *1 Enoch*, the *Genesis Apocryphon* and some *Apocryphal Acts* renders this an ineffective argument in of itself. James E. Miller, "The Redaction of Tobit and the Genesis Apocryphon," *JSP* 8 (1991), 53-61 discusses this phenomenon.

78. Recently, as Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 43 lists, Zimmermann, *The Book of Tobit*, 21; Paul Deselaers, *Das Buch Tobit: Studien zu seiner Entstehung, Komposition und Theologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 413-417; David Flusser, "Psalms, Hymns and Prayers," in *JWSTP*, (ed. M.E. Stone; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 551-77 esp. 555-56; Merten Rabenau, *Studien zum Buch Tobit* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1994), 67-93; Leonhard Rost, *Einleitung in die alttestamentlichen Apokryphen und Pseudepigraphen einschliesslich der grossen Qumran-Handschriften* (Heidelberg: Quelle u. Meyer, 1971), 46; Allen P. Wikgren, "Tobit, Book of," *IDB* 4:661.

79. Chapter 14 is represented in its entirety only by Constantinople 1519 and 'Otsar Haqqodesh, both of which appear to have a connection with G1. The other manuscripts at most have one or two verses. Chapter 13 is fully represented only by Constantinople 1519, and only partly represented by Constantinople 1516, The Bodleian Aramaic, the North French Miscellany, and Codex Or. Gaster Hebrew 28.

80. 4Q196 (Tobit<sup>a</sup>) contains parts of 13:1-14:3, 14:7; parts of 14:2-6 and possibly 14:10 are found in 4Q198 (Tobit<sup>c</sup>); 4Q199 (4QTobit<sup>d</sup>) includes 14:10, and 4Q200 (Tobit<sup>e</sup>) has material from 13:1-13:4, 13:13-14, 13:18-14:2. Also the Schøyen ms. 5234 contains part of Tob. 14:4.



are that they contain material that does not refer to the immediate context of the story, but include a strong interest in Jerusalem (expressed elsewhere only in chapters 1 and 5 and in the latter, very briefly) and the rebuilding of its Temple, and carry a much more heightened eschatological mood involving judgement upon nations and individuals.<sup>81</sup> Recently, Lawrence Wills has proposed that chapter 2-12 be considered distinct from 1 and 13-14 on the basis of such criteria as differences in genre, tone, and narrative technique.<sup>82</sup> John J. Collins also is of the opinion that at least parts of chapters 1, 13, and 14 are secondary.<sup>83</sup>

The *Ahiqar* material, which we have discussed as a source above, has also been suspected to be later developments for a number of reasons, ranging from concerns over doublets and interpolations to broader inconsistencies.<sup>84</sup> For instance, the portrayal of Nadin is strangely contradictory. In chapter 11 Nadin happily celebrates Tobit's cure with no indication given of his having committed any wrongdoing, whereas in chapter 14, his evil deeds and punishment are held up as paradigmatic.<sup>85</sup>

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81. Zimmermann, *The Book of Tobit*, 24-27. Zimmermann dates chapter 14 to about 100 CE, some thirty years after the destruction of the second temple by the Romans. However, the presence of parts of Tobit 14 in DSS manuscripts copied before 50 B.C.E. (4Q198 and 4Q199) makes Zimmermann's dating impossible.

82. Lawrence M. Wills, *The Jewish Novel in the Ancient World* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1995), 85-88.

83. John J. Collins, "The Judaism of the Book of Tobit," in *The Book of Tobit: Text, Tradition, Theology: Papers of the First International Conference on the Deuterocanonical Books, Pépa, Hungary, 20-21 May, 2004*. (Géza G. Xeravits, and József Zsengellér. Leiden: Brill, 2005), 25.

84. E.g. Meinrad M. Schumpp, *Das Buch Tobias übersetzt und erklärt* (EHAT 11; Münster: Aschendorff, 1933, 49; Bückers, *Die Bücher*, 185, 246 and Deselaers, *Das Buch Tobit*, 26 comment especially on disruptions in the narrative flow.

85. Rabenau, *Studien zum Buch Tobit*, 21.

More recently, on the basis of discontinuities and inconsistencies in the narrative, Paul Deselaers and Merten Rabenau have gone so far as to claim that there are four distinct layers (a base text with three additional redactional layers) running throughout each of the fourteen chapters with precise dates and provenances.<sup>86</sup> Rabenau's analysis is more consonant with recent scholarship because, unlike Deselaers, he takes G2 rather than G1 as the more original text type and accepts that the original language as Semitic. He also builds on the intriguing earlier work of Jozéf Milik who proposed on the basis of geographical references that Tobit was originally a Samaritan work.<sup>87</sup> An assessment that does full justice to Rabenau's treatment would require a detailed point by point explication. Rabenau's sensitivity (buffered by past scholarship) to inconsistencies within the plot and to disturbances in the Greek, including grammatical issues and odd doublets, raises important questions about the composition of Tobit, even were it at the hands of a single author. In the process of establishing redactional layers, he brings together distinctive passages that share common features. Rabenau's larger claim that layers can confidently and precisely be delineated and dated in Tobit is, in contrast, far more difficult to support.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, some scholars maintain that for the most part the work is predominantly the product of a single author. For example, Joseph Fitzmyer claims that 'the arguments simply do not hold up when scrutinized' especially regarding chapters 13 and 14.<sup>88</sup>

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86. Deselaers, *Das Buch Tobit*, 374-500; Rabenau, *Studien zum Buch Tobit*, 175-89; see also 226-47 for a presentation of Tobit in translation with different typefaces for each layer and 248-49 for a comparison with Deselaers.

87. Rabenau, *Studien zum Buch Tobit*, 179-182; Jozéf T. Milik, "La patrie de Tobie," *RB* 73 (1966), 522-30.

88. Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 42-45.

Carey Moore<sup>89</sup> relies upon the results of the rhetorical analysis by Irene Nowell.<sup>90</sup> Benedikt Otzen finds chapters 13 and 14 'indispensable' to 'the theme of exile and return' so 'important' to the story.<sup>91</sup> George Nickelsburg questions the appropriateness of using modern standards of logic when reading ancient literature.<sup>92</sup>

Give the debate, this study is in a major position to make a significant contribution by looking closely at a selected amount of material. This especially includes material that, with the exception of Deselaers and Rabenau, has not been examined with redactional concerns in mind. We shall evaluate each passage for which redaction may have signs of having taken place and postpone a final assessment on the matter to the concluding chapter.

#### 4. Problems of Date and Provenance

Another thing that should be made clear is how little can be said about the precise date and provenance of the composition of Tobit. This has the critical effect when (see, regarding method, below) we attempt to interpret Tobit in light of literature we think may be written at around the same time. The whole problem of finding a firm date and location also forces us to think seriously about redactional activity in Tobit, regardless of our initial viewpoint. This is because if a particular element is subsequently introduced into the story and that element is associated with a particular time and/or place, this could overly influence one's judgement as

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89. Moore, *Tobit*, 21-22.

90. Nowell, "Narrative Technique," provides a holistic analysis of the text in its final form.

91. Benedikt Otzen, *Tobit and Judith* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 54.

92. Nickelsburg, review of M. Rabenau, *Buch Tobit*, 349, grants that some amount of editorial work and additions may have taken place in Tobit.

to the *Sitz im Leben* of the whole. This is the same kind problem that we face, for instance, when encountering references to Islam in the Targumim.

The only absolute certainty in dating the Book of Tobit is the year 68 CE, when the site at Qumran was destroyed and Roman occupation began in the region where the caves were located. Although Qumran and nearby caves were reoccupied by Jews during the Bar Kochba revolt, they were not likely composing fiction. The earliest possible date of Tobit is decidedly not the 8th/7th century B.C.E. as purported by the story with its depiction of Tobit as an exile in Nineveh.<sup>93</sup> Terminology such as the 'Book of Moses,' for instance, which we do not begin to see until in Ezra-Nehemiah (Ez. 6:18, Neh. 13:1) and Chronicles (2 Chron. 25:4), may, depending on how we date those writings, place the Book of Tobit to the fourth century B.C.E. or later. Moreover, the Aramaic in the fragments is later than the Imperial Aramaic of the 5th century B.C.E. Elephantine Papyri, but potentially as early as the 3rd century B.C.E. Aramaic of the writings collected into 1 Enoch. Thus, if the Aramaic fragments represent the earliest Semitic form of Tobit, they support a date no earlier than about the fourth century.<sup>94</sup> We also have palaeographic dating of the Dead Sea fragments from 100 B.C.E. to 25 CE,<sup>95</sup> which further narrows down the *terminus ad quem*.

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93. Moore, *Tobit*, 40; Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 50-51.

94. Fitzmyer, "The Aramaic and Hebrew Fragments," 665, aligns Tobit's Aramaic with that of the Dead Sea Targum of Job (between the Book of Daniel (no earlier than 168 B.C.E. in final form) and the Genesis Apocryphon (between 1st century B.C.E. and 1st century C.E.). Of course, when dating the language, we may need to allow for a possible distinction between the Aramaic in which the document may have been composed and the Aramaic in which it is found preserved in the manuscripts.

95. These dates allow time for the differences that occur among manuscripts to develop (Fitzmyer, "Aramaic and Hebrew Fragments," 664-65).

The current consensus date for composition of the Book of Tobit is 200 B.C.E., give or take twenty-five years. This position is not iron-clad. It includes an argument from silence, namely that the cultural, religious, and political disturbance and persecution of the Jews instigated by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (beginning c.167 B.C.E.) have not left their mark on in the text. On the other hand, the text points to the treatment of prophetic books as scripture, something that would not be expected before about 200 B.C.E.<sup>96</sup> If redactional considerations, as noted above, are taken into account, however, especially regarding prophetic quotations, the date for some form of the text could be pushed further back.<sup>97</sup> There is definitely more to be investigated concerning the broader problem of the use of the prophets as scripture in ancient Jewish writers, for much remains that we do not know. This problem will rear up again in the course of this study and will be noted on those occasions, even if a complete resolution of it remains beyond the scope of this study.

If the date of the Book of Tobit is not absolutely certain, the provenance of the story is even more subject to dispute and here there is less evidence to be had. Most scholars favour the Diaspora because the story is set there, although in theory there is nothing to prevent it from having been written in Judaea or Samaria.<sup>98</sup> Of the countries proposed outside Israel, the

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96. Roger Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and its Background in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), provides evidence from Ben Sira attesting to the canonicity of the prophets, (73) but also cites these verses mentioned in Tobit as evidence as well (72)!

97. For now, see Rabenau, *Buch Tobit*, 13.

98. Deselaers, *Buch Tobit*, 335, has Tobit written initially in Greek in Alexandria and then translated into Aramaic in Israel. Milik's views on Samaria have already been noted.

eastern Diaspora is unlikely because of geographical errors, and Egypt is problematic because of the unlikelihood of an Aramaic or Hebrew composition originating there. Because it does not pose many of the problems just noted, Antioch has been proposed as an intriguing although unprovable alternative by some scholars.<sup>99</sup>

## 5. Major Themes of Tobit

Lastly, we comment briefly on some of the major themes in Tobit. We do so here so that when explaining how food is functioning in the story, we will have the necessary background to see if and how it relates to the central ideas of the story. A very quick summary of the message of Tobit might be that a person who performs righteous deeds will emerge happy and wealthy in the end, regardless of however he might temporarily have to suffer. Tobit refers to his own righteousness in the opening chapter and righteous deeds feature in his very first words. Instructions on how to behave take up the better part of chapters 4 and 12, and are also important to chapter 14. The term righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) and its related adjective (δίκαιος) occur again and again.<sup>100</sup> Two of the most commonly mentioned righteous deeds especially include almsgiving and burial of the dead.<sup>101</sup> The importance of the concept of righteousness, however, extends beyond claims about general behaviour and specific deeds. When Tobit speaks of getting into life-threatening trouble for burying bodies in this chapter (1:19) and when he similarly becomes blind in the next verse (2:10) his misfortunes raise the

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99. Zimmermann, *The Book of Tobit*, 21; Helen Schüngel-Straumann, *Tobit: übersetzt und ausgelegt* (Freiburg: Herder, 2000), 41.

100. δικαιοσύνη (1:3; 2:14; 4:5, 6; 12:8; 13:6 (אֱמֶת); 14:7, 9) and δίκαιος (3:2; 7:7 (צִדִּיק); 9:6; 13:13.) The literary inclusio of a triad of key terms (truth, righteousness, almsgiving) in 1:3 and 14:9 is noted by Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 103.

101. Burial (1:17-20; 2:3-8; 4:3-4; 8:9, 11, 18; 12:12; 14:1, 10, 11, 12, 13) and almsgiving (1:3, 16, 4:8-11; 12:8-9; 14:2, 9, 10, 11).

larger question of why the righteous suffer.<sup>102</sup> This issue will also come to the fore in the words of Tobit's spouse Hannah during an argument (2:14). All in all, it is the book's preoccupation with issues of righteousness that sharply distinguishes it from being just another fairy tale.

### E. Aims and Methods of This Study

With so many considerations to keep in mind, we must be absolutely clear as to the goals and approach of this kind of study. The focus of this commentary is the literary function of food in the book of Tobit within a historical context. We are of the firm opinion that even when the goal of the study is historical, the historical importance of a work of literature cannot be suitably apprehended without close attention to the document's literary features.

In analysing the subject of food in the Book of Tobit, we will appropriate the methods of two literary movements without adopting their political or cultural assumptions. These approaches employed in this study, although individually somewhat dated in the world of literary scholarship, are used in an eclectic fashion with a particular mind to the needs of an interpreter of the Book of Tobit. Drawing on the terminology of literary theory, we will be approaching our study of the Book of Tobit with a combination of two typically incompatible approaches: New Criticism and New Historicism.<sup>103</sup> The former approach treats the text as

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102. Cf. the opening of Job (1:5) which also describes its protagonist's good deeds, albeit in the third person.

103. On New Criticism, see further *Modernism and the New Criticism*, vol. 7 of *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism* (ed. A.W. Litz, L. Menand, and L. Rainey. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), Richard Foster, *The New Romantics: a Reappraisal of the New Criticism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962) and ; on New Historicism, see John Brannigan, *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism*

the exclusive focus without recourse to anything external to it, including the intent of a particular author or authors. Through the method of *close reading*, detailed attention is paid to features in the text such as pacing, syntax, patterns, and discontinuities. We also consider the significance of the absence of a detail, such as whether women are described as eaters. New Historicism, in contrast, emphasises the use of contemporary materials as a way of better apprehending the document under study. The idea behind it is that the work in question is participating in a broader cultural trend. This approach, too, moves away from an emphasis upon an isolated author. Stated differently, from the perspective of anthropology, we are using analyses that both look within (emic) and look without (etic). We have chosen a combination of these two methods particularly in light of how the Book of Tobit has instability in at least two respects. With the question of redaction as a live issue, it would be disingenuous to interpret the story as if were always of one piece, if our interest is historical. Such a reading would also serve to flatten the text. At the same time, with the date and provenance of Tobit relatively unknown, to rely exclusively upon external material is problematic because we do not know precisely where to place Tobit in relation to the material compared. Moreover, we cannot preclude some kind of originality on the part of the story.

An advantage that both methods have, as already noted, is that, together, they afford a means of finessing a very serious problem connected with the analysis of ancient literature, especially including literature that has developed organically over time. This problem involves trying to get into the mind of ancient authors and readers. Whilst it is possible part

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(Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998) and Thomas Brook, *The New Historicism: and Other Old-Fashioned Topics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991).



of the time to generate a range of likely authorial intentions and reader expectations, on other occasions we have no choice but to confess our bafflement. Moreover, as anyone who has ever attempted to write fiction is well aware, much of what results in a literary work may derive from parts of the mind that are not necessarily conscious.<sup>104</sup> The so-called 'death of an author' may be somewhat extreme, but is a concrete illustration of the move away from the idea that authorial intentionality can be objectively inferred. With the two methods (techniques of reading, really) employed, we need make claims neither about readers nor authors. From the standpoint of New Criticism we analyse the narrative and all the concerns in evidence, especially including when we can discern a kind of conversation between more than one idea. From the standpoint of New Historicism, we position elements of the narrative, including those that conflict with each other, with those of other documents that are comparable in some way. The end result will not necessarily produce 'better' or 'simpler' readings than other methods. There might be instances in which our ability to generate a single cohesive interpretation may be challenged. These might be instances in which there may be two or more readings that could equally be defended or even cases in which there is no satisfying interpretation to be found.

Indeed, at times, we may be forced to acknowledge the limitations of the chosen methods. We are also aware that we cannot escape our own subjective perspective. Where the methods aid us is that they present a clear and understandable basis for our interpretations and free us from an dogmatic insistence that a particular reading *must* be the 'correct reading.' This is no

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104. See especially George W. E. Nickelsburg, "Tobit, Genesis, and the Odyssey: a Complex Web of Intertextuality," in *Mimesis and Intertextuality in Antiquity and Christianity*. (ed. D. R. MacDonald. Harrisburg: Trinity, 2001), 52-54.

post-modern caricature of reading *Paradise Lost* as a restaurant menu, however. Employed correctly, these two methods should reduce the number of viable readings to a reasonable range. In addition, the use of two methods that are not especially cutting edge has further advantages. Such methods lend themselves better to the ‘big-picture’ observations that are a primary goal of this study. Ironically, the very ruptures that are arguably present in Tobit show up all the better when viewed in contrast to the patterns revealed by close reading.

It is also possible to apply other methods in the service of appreciating the literary role of food in the story. We have already alluded to anthropology. Sociological, or psychological concepts may occasionally also be helpful. The Book of Tobit, however, should not be treated as field data with which it is possible to employ methods from the aforementioned disciplines to yield insights about the worlds of Tobit’s authors. This would mean using these methods for a purpose for which they were never designed, as well as obscuring the literary character of the Tobit traditions.

As stated above, this literary study is concerned with historical matters. The troublesome matter of Tobit’s date and provenance, which is discussed above, necessarily brings historical issues to the forefront. This study, which performs as thorough an analysis of food practices as possible, has the potential to contribute to those historical questions. Indeed, the commentary aims to explore the historical significance (in its broadest possible understanding) of how and why Jewish documents like Tobit employ food imagery.<sup>105</sup> The

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105. Claudia Bergmann, "The Ability/Inability to Eat: Determining Life and Death in *Bel et Draco*," *JSJ* 35 (2004), 262-83 is a step in the right direction.

ability of food to transcend many typical categories is especially significant in this regard. By examining the Book of Tobit through the mechanisms by which food imagery contributes not only to the telling of the story, but also as endorsements of particular practices -- some part of the wider world and some particular to Judaism -- one is afforded a unique perspective on how the story of Tobit draws heavily upon non-Jewish themes, yet at the same time is profoundly Jewish. The ability to integrate non-Jewish cultural influences without losing what is distinctive in Judaism is one of the great concerns of so-called Second Temple Judaism, but it is already present in the Hebrew Bible and is a continuing theme in Rabbinic literature and throughout later Jewish history. It is essentially the same question that every minority culture must negotiate.

## F. How This Commentary Operates

For the most part, this study follows the chronological order of the story excepting instances in which related passages are grouped thematically. Chapter Two analyses Tobit's food related deeds that he mentions in the opening chapter of the story. Chapter Three discusses Tobit's infamous Shavuot meal, his blinding by bird droppings, the support he receives from Ahiqar and Hannah and the dispute involving Hannah's goat. It also comments on the absence of food references in chapter 3 of the story. Chapter Four is concerned with the food-linked instructions found in Tobit's testament to his son Tobiah in chapter 4 of the story. In addition, it notes a possible reference to travel rations. Chapter Five has two main foci: (1) Tobiah's eat-or-be-eaten struggle with a large fish and (2) Tobiah's harvesting and deployment of the fish's organs. Grouped together here are relevant material from chapters 6, 8, and 11 in the story. Chapter Six is concerned with wedding linked meals and so discusses

passages from chapters 6, 7-9, 11 (which is not in Sinaiticus), and 12, with an emphasis on 7-9. Chapter Seven largely discusses the final scenes in which Raphael instructs Tobit and Tobiah before ascending back to heaven; in addition, a reference to fasting in chapter 10 (not in Sinaiticus) is analysed together with one of Raphael's statements on the practice. The chapter closes with some remarks about the absence of food in chapters 13 and 14 of the story. Chapter Eight offers some concluding observations.

A typical chapter opens with a brief introduction, followed by a translation of the passage in question. This is followed by other forms of analysis, whose order of appearance will be subject to the needs of that particular unit. Many of the units will receive a sustained text-critical treatment, observations of potential narrative tensions or redactional elements, and evaluation of the passage's relationship to purported sources. Other analyses include examinations of key terms, translational issues, and implications for the study of class and gender. A central component of every analysis, using close reading where applicable, pertains to the function of food in the unit. The technique of close reading is especially important here, as well in our analyses of narrative tensions, sources, and class and gender. In addition, in order to situate Tobit within a broader context, we follow the method of New Historicism and bring in appropriate background information.

A few words are in order concerning the selection of this comparative material. In addition to ancient Jewish writings within a couple of centuries or less of the putative date of Tobit's composition, we have also drawn widely across time and space. We look at material from

Mesopotamia, Ugarit, Greece, and Rome, as well as Christian writings.<sup>106</sup> This material is used mainly to show that such practices or attitudes are documentable and thus it is possible to posit the existence of such practices or attitudes in Tobit. Also, the comparative material may be used to demonstrate that certain things found in Tobit are also found elsewhere among either Israelites/Jews, Gentiles, or both. And lastly, citing this material can help in identifying things that may be unique to or at least particularly emphasised in Tobit.

The last section of each passage is labelled “Leading Characteristics.” Recapitulating to some extent on earlier observations, but from a new perspective, this section tracks the way food functions from three dimensions: literary, theological, and socio-economic. Close reading is important to this section as well. For the first dimension we comment on whether the reference is in the foreground or background and whether it is an actual action or part of a discourse. For the second dimension, we not only look to see if there is a link to the all-important theme of righteousness, but also whether that form of righteousness is specifically Jewish. For the third dimension, we bring together material already noted in our class and gender section with some fresh observations.

Each chapter of the study closes with a conclusion containing a summary of the chapter's main points. In some of these conclusions we make some general observations on why a focus upon authorial intentionality can lead to difficulties within the said chapter. If argued

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106. For simplicity, Christian material includes the New Testament and other writings associated with Jesus followers. Documents that may be a mix of pre-Christian Jewish elements and Christian elements will be treated with an awareness of these complexities.

properly, these remarks should stand as further justification for our choice in methods.

## Chapter Two: Tobit's Testimonial (Tob. 1)

### A. Introduction

The Book of Tobit opens with a presentation of essential background information. This includes such particulars as the genealogy, time, place, and basic biography of Tobit, one of the story's primary protagonists. In fact, Tobit narrates most of the chapter himself. He shares details about his youth as an orphan, his marriage, the birth of his son, his exile, and his fortunes under several Assyrian rulers. As we have noted in the introduction to this commentary, the idea of righteousness is central to this first chapter. The importance of this theme can be seen by the fact that in his very first words, Tobit introduces himself as one who has 'walked the paths of truth and righteousness all the days of his life' (1:3). Tobit supports this statement further with a litany of specific righteous deeds. These deeds include Tobit's loyalty to the Temple in Jerusalem, his endogamous marriage within his own family, his giving of alms to the needy, and his burial of his dead compatriots. In addition, Tobit speaks of himself performing three activities linked to food: (1) he brings edible tithes and first fruits to the Temple in Jerusalem, (2) he refrains from consuming 'Gentile food,' and (3) he feeds the hungry.

### B. Tithes and First Fruits (1:6-8)

The very first reference to food and its consumption in the entire story is Tobit's account of his tithing activities. This account occurs in the larger context of Tobit's assertion of his loyalty to the Temple in Jerusalem, a loyalty he claims not to be shared by any of his

kinsfolk. Tobit describes how he alone of his kinsfolk delivered (mostly edible) tithes and first fruits to the Temple in Jerusalem before he was exiled. Tobit's list of offerings is extensive. Indeed, the range of edible items encompasses both animal and vegetable food, raw and processed materials, things that were brought and things that were bought, items that were explicitly eaten (by Tobit and others) and items that were not. There is in fact but a single type of offering among those listed here that is not normally eaten (by humans at least). This is the fleece resulting from a sheep shearing. Certainly, the characterisation of tithes as predominantly edible accords with the later definition of a tithe in *m. Maaserot* 1:1 as a type of food.

1. The Translated Text

We now come to the passage itself. This extensive unit, as we shall see, will require much comment. This includes some complicated matters pertaining to translation and text-criticism, some background information of how the list of offerings relates to both the Torah and to other ancient Jewish writings, and concerns about redaction and class and gender issues. In the midst of these concerns, we shall describe how the unit as a whole functions.

1:6<sup>107</sup> And I alone used to go frequently to Jerusalem on the festivals as it was written for all Israel as an eternal ordinance and with the *best [of processed products]*<sup>108</sup> (ἀπαρχάς) and the *first fruits [of the produce]* (πρωτογενήματα) and the tithes of the cattle (κτηνῶν) and the first [or best] shearings of the sheep (προβάτων), I would hurry off to Jerusalem.

1:7 And I would give them to the priests, the *sons of Aaron*

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107. No DSS fragments correspond to this unit.  
108. Italics denote places in the text that are discussed below with respect to translational or text critical matters. For items absent in S, the preceding word or phrase is highlighted.



[who were] at the altar and the tithe of the wine (οἴνου) and the grain (σίτου) and the olive oil (ἐλαίου)<sup>109</sup> and the pomegranates (ρόων)<sup>110</sup> and the rest of the fruit (κροδρύων)<sup>111</sup> [I would give] to the sons of Levi who served in Jerusalem. ‘And the second tithe<sup>112</sup> of the six<sup>113</sup> years I would pay<sup>114</sup> with money and I would go and spend it in Jerusalem every year.

1:8 And I would give it [the third tithe] to the orphans and the widows and the *resident aliens* who are attached to the children of Israel. I would contribute and give it to them in the third year and we would eat it (ἡσθίομεν) in accordance with the commandment decreed concerning them in the Law of Moses and according to the orders which Deborah the mother of Ananiel our father enjoined, for my father left me an orphan [when] he died.<sup>115</sup>

## 2. Issues in Translation and Text-Critical Issues

Before proceeding to our analysis of role food plays in this passage, it is important to clarify how certain terms may be best translated as well comment on the numerous text-critical difficulties. We begin with two issues concerning translation. In both cases we will be departing from how the terms are rendered in the more recent commentaries.

The first issue involving translation relates to how two key terms, ἀπαρχή and

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109. A marginal note in S corrects the text to the more typical order of grain, wine, and oil (cf. OL manuscripts).

110. A scribal correction in Sinaiticus adds ‘ant the figs’ (cf. OL manuscripts).

111. S, κροδρύων, is corrected to ἀκροδρύων in a marginal note (Weeks, et al., *The Book of Tobit*, 337).

112. Lit.: ‘tenth,’ from Hebrew מֵעֵשֶׂר.

113. *Sixth* (Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 98) is a typographical error and is correct elsewhere (109-110). The six years refer to the first six years of a seven year system in which the seventh was the sabbatical year. (Ex. 23:10-11; Lev. 25:2-7)

114. Lit.: ‘tithe’.

115. Lit.: ‘for my father left me an orphan and died,’ cf. Di Lella, *NETS*.

πρωτογέννημα should be translated. (1:6) The Septuagint often uses ἀπαρχή to translate ראשית, and πρωτογέννημα in the plural usually corresponds with בכורים, as is notably the case in Numbers 18:12-19, which lies behind Tob. 1:6.<sup>116</sup> Although both ראשית and בכורים are often rendered as ‘first fruits’, it is important to stress that the terms are not really synonymous.<sup>117</sup> Whilst ראשית can sometimes mean ‘the first’ and at other times denote ‘the best,’ בכורים only refers to ‘first fruits.’<sup>118</sup> Furthermore, ראשית tends to refer to processed material, whilst בכורים is associated with raw agricultural products.<sup>119</sup> Some commentators translate ἀπαρχή<sup>120</sup> and πρωτογέννημα<sup>121</sup> with these nuances in mind for Tobit. Most scholars, however, follow the more generalist and less accurate approach and translate ἀπαρχή as some kind of first fruits (often explicitly agricultural).<sup>122</sup>

The translation of πρωτογέννημα as ‘firstling,’ however, is even more problematic. This is not merely a case of nuance, as with ἀπαρχή. The translation of ‘firstling’ does not reflect

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116. Num. 18:12 for ἀπαρχή and Num. 18:13 for πρωτογέννημα.  
117. Otto Eissfeldt, *Erstlinge und Zehnten im alten Testament: Ein Betrag zur Geschichte des israelitisch-judischen Kultus* (BWAT 22; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1917), 19. The meaning of ‘the best’ appears in Deut. 33:21; 1 Sam. 2:29; Ezek. 20:40.  
118. Eissfeldt, *Erstlinge*, 11-26.  
119. Richard O. Rigby, “First Fruits,” *ABD* 2:796. Grain, along with oil and wine, would be considered a processed product given that it would have to be threshed and winnowed, as discussed in Oded Borowski, “Agriculture,” *ABD* 1:97.  
120. Schumpp, *Das Buch Tobias*, 15; Johann Gamberoni, “Das ‘Gesetz des Mose’ im Buch Tobias,” in *Studien zum Pentateuch: Walter Kornfeld zum 60. Geburtstag*, (ed. G. Braulik et al; Freiburg im B.: Herder, 1977), 235.  
121. Eissfeldt, *Erstlinge*, 119 (including re: Num. 18:13); Schumpp, *Buch Tobit*, 16; Gamberoni, “Das ‘Gesetz des Mose’,” 235, who thinks this is likely.  
122. NRSV; Rabenau, *Buch Tobit*; Moore, *Tobit*; Fitzmyer, *Tobit*; Di Lella, *NETS*; and many others.

the Greek.<sup>123</sup> To be sure, the etymology of πρωτογένημα deceptively suggests that it denotes ‘firstborn.’ After all, γίγνομαι can mean anything from ‘to come into being,’ ‘to be born,’ (of people) or ‘to be produced,’ among other things.<sup>124</sup> Accordingly, Fitzmyer’s analysis of πρωτογένημα with respect to the meaning ‘to be born’ is on the face of it, possible.<sup>125</sup> One must keep in mind, however, the post-classical terms γενήμα and γεννήμα refer exclusively to produce in the plural and often in the singular.<sup>126</sup> This is seen in the hundred or so instances in the Duke Databank of Documentary Papyri, as early as the third century B.C.E.<sup>127</sup> This is similarly observable in the way LXX uses γεν(ν)ήμα to translate agricultural produce, especially מְבוּשָׁה, e.g., Deuteronomy 14:23. In particular, Jews in antiquity consistently use πρωτογένημα with reference to soil-based agricultural products.<sup>128</sup> In contrast, the Septuagint employs a separate term for ‘firstborn’ that it uses overwhelmingly: πρωτότοκος.<sup>129</sup> Furthermore, the use of πρωτότοκος in G1 (5:14) shows, at the minimum, that it was still known as the Book of Tobit was being transmitted.

The second translational matter concerns προσηλύτος, which recent commentators

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123. NRSV; Moore, *Tobit*; Fitzmyer, *Tobit*; Di Lella, *NETS* and many others.

124. LSJ, 349-350.

125. Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 108; Josephus, *A.J.* 4.70 uses a related phrase, τὸ γεννηθὲν πρῶτον, to refer to firstborn animals.

126. LSJ, 343 and 344; cf. Schumpp, *Das Buch Tobit*, 15.

127. Revenue Laws of Ptolemy Philadelphus 24.15, cited in LSJ, 343.

128. Ezek. 48:12; Neh. 10:36-37; Sir. 45:20b-21 (Hebrew different); 1 Macc. 3:49; Philo esp. stresses that πρωτογεννήμα (note variant spelling) is agricultural in *Spec. II*, 179-181; as does *T. Iss.* 5:4, whatever one’s position of its authorship.

129. πρωτότοκος occurs more than fifty times in the LXX with respect to both humans and animals, usually corresponding to בכור and other terms related to first born, e.g. Deut. 12:6; Num. 18:15 (twice), 17 (thrice); and Lev. 27:26.

frequently take to refer to proselytes (1:8). It is important to remember, however, that the Greek προσήλυτος can simply denote ‘sojourner.’ Indeed, the LXX/Old Greek employs this term exclusively to translate the Hebrew word for resident alien (גֵּר). Therefore, the claim that προσήλυτος has become a technical term because of its use in the phrase ‘who are attached to the children of Israel’ (τοῖς προσκειμένοις τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ)<sup>130</sup> has no basis.<sup>131</sup> After all, that phrase is already amply attested (with some variation) in the Greek of the Hexateuch.<sup>132</sup> In fact, with some exception (e.g. Lev. 17:3), ‘who are attached to the children of Israel’ has a direct correspondence to the Hebrew.<sup>133</sup> As a result, rather than supporting the translation ‘proselyte’ the phrase’s close ties to formulations in the Hexateuch suggest the opposite, that it is *not* a technical term for converts in this context.

We now turn to text-critical matters. There are a whole series of problems, some of which are fairly complex. This is most likely because the length of the description of the tithes and first fruits in 1:6-1:8 and its form as a list was conducive to scribal confusion. Thus, we find various scribal errors or other difficulties throughout the passage, amongst the priestly offerings, the Levitical tithe, and the two subsequent tithes.

To begin with, there is the problem of missing one of the required offerings, the firstlings (1:6). Numbers 18:15 (see Sources, below) indicates that firstlings should be brought. They

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130. τοῖς προσκειμένοις τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ.

131. Pace Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 109-110.

132. Zimmermann, *The Book of Tobit*, 48; Lev. 16:29; 17:8, 10, 12, 13; 22:18; Num. 15:15, 16, 26, 29; 19:10; Josh. 20:9; cf. also Eissfeldt, *Erstlinge*, 119.

133. Often some variation of דָּגַר דָּגַר בְּתוֹכָם.

are the only thing that Tobit does not seem to bring. (Perhaps this is the reason for the mistranslation of πρωτογένημα; scholars wished to see the firstlings as expected.) Unfortunately, the OL evidence is ambiguous. Regius and others<sup>134</sup> collapse the first two terms in Sinaiticus into a word whose first meaning is ‘first fruits’ (*primitia/primicia*) but which can also denote ‘the first things of their kind, firstlings.’<sup>135</sup> Other manuscripts, however,<sup>136</sup> read *primitivus*, which especially means firstborn.<sup>137</sup> Reginensis employs yet another term (*primogenita*), also meaning ‘the first of its kind’. (The reading ‘first born’ is also found in one Medieval Jewish manuscript, Constantinople 1516, בכורות. This may suggest that the Jewish translator at least thought that was what the *Vorlage* intended.<sup>138</sup>) It is further intriguing that in some dialects of Aramaic, the spelling of ‘first fruit’ and ‘first born’ is identical in the singular and similar in the plural.<sup>139</sup> Such an orthographical resemblance increases the likelihood of a transmission error.

Next, we consider a reading present in OL material, but not in Sinaiticus (1:7). Speaking of

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134. Corbeiensis, Bobbiensis, Monacensis, Latin citation from Speculum §LIX 547.7-1.

135. Lewis and Short, 1443.

136. Bible de Rosas; Sangermanensis 15.

137. Lewis and Short, 1443; Skemp, *Vulgate of Tobit*, 42 translates *primitiva* as ‘the first (of this flock).

138. What the language of *Vorlage* of the text tradition to which Constantinople 1516 belongs is beyond the scope of this study. But do note some important readings such as 6:12 (father loves Sarah; 4Q197, neither in G1 or G2 but in 319, OL, G3, and 1516). An OL *Vorlage* with possible connections to G3 text traditions, such as Reginensis (see further, Weeks, *Neglected Texts*, 23) is one possibility.

139. Jastrow, 145, singular בוכר; plural: first born (בוכרין, בוכריא), first fruits (בוכר). For first fruits, there is also ביכורין (CAL) and see alternative spelling ביכרא attested by Jastrow in a document he calls Targ. Y. II. The Wadi Natrun, in an unusual departure from correlation with G1, reads וְיִצְחָק הַכֹּהֵן.

the priestly offerings, Regius and some other OL manuscripts read ‘and as it was the custom (*et quod moris erat*)’ or a similar phrase after ‘sons of Aaron.’<sup>140</sup> This reading is absent, however, in Reginensis and a citation in Speculum §LIX 547.11 - 548.2. It is difficult to say if the phrase was in an earlier Semitic form of Tobit, although it is possible. The phrase might imply that it was not the custom at the time of its composition; it certainly was not the custom of the 8th/7th century B.C.E., the period which the narrative claims to be describing.

We now turn to another instance in which Latin witnesses attest to material absent in Sinaiticus (1:7). OL manuscripts and a Latin citation from Speculum §LIX 547.11 - 548.2 consistently include figs in the list of fruits that Tobit brings to the Levites (1:7). Most likely, figs were present in an earlier, Semitic Tobit. With figs included, the verse matches the seven species associated with the promised land in Deuteronomy 8:8. In that verse figs occur immediately before pomegranates, as they do in the OL.<sup>141</sup> In addition, a marginal correction adds figs (after pomegranates) to Sinaiticus. This indicates, at the very least, that a later scribe also thought they should be included as part of the list.<sup>142</sup>

Lastly, we come to two related and very complicated problems. The first problem is that if we try to read the account of the ‘second tithe’ and gifts to the needy in the third year as they are currently presented in the text (1:7-8), the result is nonsense. This section of the passage reads:

And the second tithe of the six years I would pay with money

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140. Corbeiensis, Bobbiensis, Monacensis, Biblia de Rodas, Sangermanensis 15; Alcalà: ‘and the second according to the custom by law (*et secundum morem legis*)’.

141. Figs are also found Constantinople 1516, further suggesting a dependence on OL.

142. Hanhart, *Tobit*, 63; Weeks, et al., *The Book of Tobit*, 337.

and spend it in Jerusalem every year 1:8 and I would give 'them' to the orphans and the widows and the resident aliens who attached themselves to the children of Israel. I would contribute and give it to them in the third year.'

καὶ τὴν δεκάτην τὴν δευτέραν ἀπεδεκάτιζον ἀργυρίῳ τῶν ἐξ ἐτῶν καὶ ἐπορευόμην καὶ ἔδαπάνων αὐτὰ ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ καθ' ἕκαστον ἐνιαυτόν. 1:8 αὐτὰ τοῖς ὀρφανοῖς καὶ ταῖς χήραις καὶ προσηλύτοις τοῖς προσκειμένοις τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ εἰσέφερον καὶ ἐδίδουν αὐτοῖς ἐν τῷ τρίτῳ ἔτει.

If one reads the text unaltered, it appears that the tithe for the needy occurs both every year and every third year. Not only does this make no sense, it also contradicts Deuteronomy 14:27-29 and 26:12, which, as noted below (Sources), state that the poor tithe occurs *only* every third year. Gifts to the needy are also consistently separate from the second tithe in other Jewish texts.<sup>143</sup> Furthermore, and even more significantly, all OL manuscripts make it clear that there is a separate tithe; Reginensis and Monacensis explicitly refer to a 'third tithe.' This might also be the case in Regius and Corbeiensis.<sup>144</sup> It seems very likely, then, that Sinaiticus' reading is the result of a scribal error. Quite possibly, it may have been motivated by other phrases beginning with 'and I would give (καὶ ἐδίδουν)' in 1:7 and/or 1:8.<sup>145</sup> It therefore seems reasonably safe to postulate that three tithes were explicitly labelled as such in an earlier, Semitic form of Tobit.<sup>146</sup>

143. These include Josephus, *A.J.* 4.240, *TgPs-J* to Deut. 26:12, and the Mishnah at various points, e.g. *m. Ma'as. Sh.* 5:6, 9; *m. Yad.* 4:3.

144. Regius and Corbeiensis read *et tertii ad decimationem*, 'the tithe of the third (something masculine).' The missing noun might be the word for 'year,' *annum*. Schumpp, *Buch Tobit*, 20, however, appears to propose that Regius and Corbeiensis *tertii* (genitive case) is a scribal error for *tertiam* (accusative), yielding the reading 'the third tithe'. Many thanks to Marleen Verschoren for comments on the Latin.

145. Cf. Zimmermann, *The Book of Tobit*, 153-54.

146. Franz H. Reusch, *Libellus Tobit e codice Sinaitico* (Friburgi Brisgoviae: 1870) is cited and endorsed by Schumpp, *Buch Tobit* 20, for restoring the text to yield 'and the third tithe I would contribute and give to the orphans, etc,' καὶ τὴν δεκάτην τρίτην ἐδίδουν

The second and related problem is that Tobit does not eat the second tithe as he should, but does eat the poor tithe, as he should not. Even though, according to Deuteronomy 14:25-26 (Sources, below), eating is the essence of the second tithe, Tobit does not explicitly eat this offering. Instead, he appears to consume the tithe for the needy, despite the fact that the Torah does not speak of such a practice. What's more, Tobit's words in Sinaiticus 'we used to eat (ἡσθίομεν),' referring to what seems to be the tithe given to the destitute, are not unanimously supported in the Old Latin. Instead of the first person plural, Regius, Corbeiensis and Reginensis read 'I used to eat (*manducabam*)'. In fact, the plural pronoun 'we' appears only once in the Latin evidence and there it has nothing to do with eating.<sup>147</sup> Seeing that we have already demonstrated that this part of passage is significantly disturbed, it does not require too much of a stretch to see how the two tithes were further mixed up with each other.<sup>148</sup>

### 3. Background and Sources

Some more information about tithes and first fruits, their basis in the Torah, and their development in Second Temple Jewish writing will further support the text-critical observations above. Such information will at the same time make it easier to best appreciate the significance of Tobit's tithing practices in the passage. Tithing procedures are already a

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αὐτὰ τοῖς ὀρφανοῖς καὶ ταῖς χήραις καὶ προσηλύτοις τοῖς προσκειμένοις τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ εἰσέφερον καὶ ἐδίδουν. Zimmermann, *The Book of Tobit*, 154 and Moore, *Tobit*, 109 agree with the restoration.

147. Monacensis (not the most reliable edition, as noted in the Introduction) reads that 'we would bring about (*consumabamus*)[ a commandment.' There is no reference to eating in Bible de Rosas and Alcalà nor in a citation from Speculum §LIX 548.2-4.

148. Cf. Eissfeldt, *Erstlinge*, 119n2.



fairly complex subject in the Hebrew Bible. In fact, the various passages concerning such offerings in the Five Books of Moses clearly envision very different processes. A key distinction is present between the Deuteronomic account in which the household eats the tithe ‘at the place where God chooses’ and the approach of Numbers and Leviticus in which the food is given to priests and Levites explicitly or implicitly.<sup>149</sup>

From the documents that we have extant from the Second Temple period and later there does not seem to be any evidence of a universal system. Certain trends, however, are observable. Excluding the Hebrew Bible, these writings do not simply adopt one of several tithing procedures. Instead, they consistently employ a harmonising approach. In place of a single tithe, they authorise at least two tithes.<sup>150</sup> In these writings, the first tithe, derived from Numbers 18:21 is at least initially intended for the Levites, as in the case in Tobit.<sup>151</sup> The second tithe derives from Deuteronomy. Most documents derive it from Deuteronomy 14:23, Deuteronomy's description of its normative tithe.<sup>152</sup> Tobit (1:7), however, and Josephus, whose system Tobit resembles most closely as a whole, seem to follow Deuteronomy 14:24-25. These verses describe how one can convert the goods into money to be spent in the

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149. Deut. 14:23; Lev. 27:26-27; 30-33 speak of offerings as belonging to YHWH; Num. 18:12-19 specifically states the offerings are to go to the priests.

150. At least two tithes are apparent in the Septuagint (e.g. Deut. 26:12), TS (60:6 and 43:3-17), *Jub.* 32 (e.g. 32:11), Josephus (e.g. *Ant.* 4.240); *Tg Ps-J* (Deut. 26:12 and Deut. 14:23) and self-evident in the Mishnah by a tractate devoted to it (*Ma'aser Sheni*).

151. TS 60:6; *TgPs-J* to Deut. 26:12 and *m. Ma'as. Sh.* 5:9. The problem of whether priests or Levites (or both) received the first tithe in Second Temple times and for what reason(s) is not fully resolved and is beyond the scope of this study. It is reflected in differences between what Josephus has Moses say (*A.J.* 4. 240, Levites only; *A.J.* 4.68 and 4.205, priests and Levites) and what he reports as a witness (*Vita* 62-63; 80; see also *A.J.* 20.181, 20.206-207).

152. E.g. *Jub.* 32:10-14; TS 43:3-12; *TgPs-J* to Deut. 14:23.

place chosen by YHWH if one lives too far away or has too many goods.<sup>153</sup> In some writings, there also appears to be as many as three tithes given in a single year, as appears to be the case in Tobit. This third tithe is derived from a procedure outlined in Deuteronomy 14:27-29 and 26:12. According to Deuteronomy, this tithe, which is given to orphans, widows, Levites, and resident aliens, is supposed to occur every third year in place of the usual tithe. In some later Jewish writings, however, during the third year it appears to take place (no longer involving Levites) in addition to the first two tithes.<sup>154</sup>

We conclude this survey with two last items: the giving of the ἀπαρχή and πρωτογένημα and the cattle tithe. The depiction of Tobit as giving the former to the priests is well attested elsewhere.<sup>155</sup> The gift of the cattle tithe (to the priests who take it in proxy for YHWH), is by far less uniformly attested, although it is not unique to Tobit.<sup>156</sup> We shall see shortly that it is only mentioned once in the Pentateuch.

Altogether, Tobit's particular dependence on the Torah may be best summarised in the chart

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153. Josephus, *A.J.* 4.205. This may be the because Tobit does in fact live far away and Josephus may be thinking of the many Diaspora Jews who came to the Temple.

154. *Jub.* 32:10 and TS 43:5 indicate the second tithe was eaten every year and thus not replaced by the tithe to the needy; Josephus, *A.J.* 4.242 and *TgPs-J* to Deut. 26:12 explicitly have three tithes; although in the Mishnah the third tithe often replaces the second, in some cases, e.g. *Ma'as. Sh.* 5:6 all three tithes take place in the fourth and seventh years on the eve of Passover.

155. A non-exhaustive set of examples would include *Jub.* 13:25, TS 19:5, 4QMMT (e.g. 4Q394 frag. 8 col. IV 13.)

156. So 2 Chr. 31:6; *Jub.* 32:15; 4QMMT (e.g. 4Q396 Column III lines 3-4/394 frag. 8 col. IV 13-14, partly restored/4Q397 frag. 6-13 5-6, partly restored); the Damascus Document (4Q270 frag. 2 col. II 7-9); Philo, *Virt.*, 95. Josephus is silent. *m. Zevah.* 5:8, in contrast, states that though the priests eat the first born, the tithe is sacrificed and eaten by the owner.

on the next page. As we have already indicated, everything Tobit offers has a general basis in the Pentateuch. The idea that offerings should be a part of pilgrimages is found in Deuteronomy 16. Specific offerings are described in Deuteronomy 8, 14, and 26; Numbers 18; and Leviticus 27. Whenever possible, Tobit follows Numbers 18, supplementing it with other sources only after it has been exhausted. This, too, appears to be part of a general trend.

CHART : MAJOR PENTATEUCHAL SOURCES OF THE TITHES IN TOBIT 1:6-8

Offering	Basis in Torah
(Notion that gifts be given on pilgrimage holidays)	(Deuteronomy 16:16-17 cf. Exodus 23:15 and Exodus 34:19)
<b>A. Given to Priests</b>	
1. ἀπαρχή	Numbers 18:12 <sup>157</sup>
2. πρωτογένημα First/ Firstling(?)	Numbers 18:13/Numbers 18:14-17 (?)
3. Cattle Tithe	Leviticus 27:32
4. First sheep shearing	Deuteronomy 18:4
<b>B. Given to Levites ‘first tithe’</b>	Numbers 18:21 but see also Deuteronomy 8:8 re: fruit and Deuteronomy 14:23 re: wine, grain, oil and perhaps Leviticus 27:30 re:fruit??
<b>C. Spent in Jerusalem ‘second tithe’</b>	Deuteronomy 14:25-26
<b>D. Given to needy ‘third tithe’</b>	Deuteronomy 14:27-29/26:12; also re: Levites see Deuteronomy 12:12

All in all, the Book of Tobit stands out by virtues of its exhaustive detail, combining tithes and first fruits of almost every kind in rapid succession. This has been acknowledged by

157. On the choicest, see also Ex. 23:19 and Ex. 34:26 (רֵאשִׁית בְּכוֹרֵי) and Ex. 32:22 .

many scholars who are simply studying tithing or Jewish law in Second Temple times.<sup>158</sup> This is so much the case that it is worth considering whether Tobit's tithing system corresponded with one that was actually ever practised or whether it is in part a literary construction.

#### 4. Function of Food in the Unit

Not only is Tobit's list impressive in comparison with other ancient Jewish writings, it is impressive in comparison with the other deeds mentioned in this chapter. Tobit's Temple devotion, including his presentation of tithes is the most detailed characteristic of his pre-exilic life in the Land of Israel (1:4-1:8). This hints to the important role that the passage plays so near the beginning of the story (1:3). (It is the third righteous activity mentioned, preceded only by righteous behaviour in general and the giving of alms.) The importance assigned to Tobit's tithing is further seen in its extreme detail (as already noted) and unusual length (149 words). Even the deed of the burial of the dead, including the whole story involving Sennacherib, is no more than 137 words and the key theme of almsgiving consists of a little more than 40 words, even if the charity to the hungry and naked are included. Moreover, that a member of the northern Naphtali tribe should show devotion to the southern Temple is even more remarkable (but see 2 Chr. 30:11).

Oddly enough, although tithes and priestly offerings revolve around food and eating, as the detailed references to edible items and eating make clear, their existence as food as such is of secondary importance in the narrative.<sup>159</sup> Rather, it is Tobit's tithing practices and the proof

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158. E.g. Ralph Marcus, *Law in the Apocrypha* (New York: Columbia University Oriental Studies XXVI. Columbia University Press, 1927), 109.

159. Compare with e.g. *Jub.* 32:10-14, *TS* 43:2-17; *Josephus A.J.* 4. 205.

they offer of his scrupulous observance that is the focus here. For it is quite evident that tithes were not always paid in full or could be wrongly eaten.<sup>160</sup> Accordingly, tithing was to become an unambiguous emblematic marker of piety in writings dating from the 1st century C.E. onwards.<sup>161</sup> Already we discern such an attitude in the Book of Tobit. Tobit goes out of his way to call attention to the difference between his own behaviour and that of his relatives (as he will do so again in only one other instance). Moreover, with a system more demanding than any other attested, Tobit's outlay also seems relatively expensive. The Mishnah, by contrast, does not create as heavy a burden, for instance by not requiring the substantial cattle tithe and limiting sheep's fleece offerings to owners with many sheep.<sup>162</sup>

## 5. Narrative Tensions and Possible Redaction

The fact that tithing is such a major marker for Jewish piety, especially in documents that are later than when Tobit is traditionally dated is intriguing. It is also notable that Tobit's system appears to resemble that of Josephus, an author of the 1st century CE, rather than earlier documents. In light of this, we should also keep in mind that Tobit's account of his tithing activities as well as his Temple devotion generally seems out of proportion to the rest of his testimonial. It also sends the narrative abruptly back into the past; in the previous verse (1:3), Tobit is discussing his good deeds in exile. Even more interestingly, it is one of only two righteous observances in chapter 1 that are *not* repeated in Tobit's address to son Tobiah in

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160. Jer. 2:3 (metaphorically); Neh.13:10-12; Mal. 3:8-10; Jdt.11:13 (illustrates the existence of the concept at the minimum); Philo, *Spec.* I.154 (*contra* I.44!); and the whole existence of the Mishnaic tractate *Demai* (doubtfully tithed items).

161. Luke 11:42/Matt. 23:23; *b.Ber.* 47b; *b.Git.* 61a (see also *t.Avod. Zar.* iii, 10); failure to tithe is said to lead to disaster, e.g. *m.Avot* 5:8-9.

162. *m. Hul.* 11:1-2.; E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 B.C.E.-66 C.E.* (Philadelphia: Trinity, 1994), 150.

## 6. Class and Gender Issues

Having addressed some of the traditional issues discussed when analysing ancient writings, we consider the equally important subject of class and gender. This includes the complicated place of women in the story. Although the text is garbled, Deborah appears to be linked with the teaching about feeding widows, orphans, and resident aliens. But evidence from a variety of sources depicts women actually feeding persons in need, not merely teaching.<sup>164</sup> In the Book of Tobit, however, neither Hannah, Edna, nor Sarah are observed feeding various dependent persons, nor are they instructed to do so.

## 7. Leading Characteristics

As noted in the introduction, we shall lastly be tracking the food-linked elements of each unit according to a series of categories. Some of the information will of necessity repeat what has been said in earlier sections of this chapter. This repetition, however, may be justified by the fact that such data is being placed in a new context, one that permits us to view the various dimensions to references to food and its consumption within a common framework.

We first clarify in what precise way the tithing practices relate to food and its consumption.

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163. There may be more to the matter than the explanation of Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 76, that the absence of tithing and dietary regulations in chapter 4 is due to the genre of instruction found in that chapter.

164. E.g. 1 Sam. 25:18; 1 Kgs 17:9; 2 Kgs 4:8; Prov. 31:20 (no direct explicit food reference, but may be suggested); see especially *b. Ta'an. 23b*.

This is easily addressed. As noted above, the tithes themselves are food, almost by definition food, and however we address the text-critical problems, they are both distributed as a gift and consumed.

The first dimension we use to classify the food references concerning tithing is the literary dimension. We have observed that although the tithing practices themselves are in the foreground, the edibility of the tithes is not the focus, although there is one reference to consumption. We note now also that tithing does not occur as an action that takes place at the time the story opens, but is part of a flashback within Tobit's broader discourse about his past behaviour.

We now turn to examine whether there is a relationship between Tobit's offerings and the all important theme of righteousness. This, as we already stated, is undeniable. Tithing places Tobit among the very righteous in three respects: (1) it means he is faithful to the Jerusalem Temple, (2) it distinguishes him from his unfaithful tribe members and (3) his (nearly) complete payment of the tithes and other items is in and of itself a marker of piety. We may observe here further that this practice is not merely righteous, it is a specifically Jewish form of it, and a specifically Second Temple form, at that. Even more specifically, it is directly tied to the Temple cult and has its basis in the Torah. Altogether, such behaviour is part of Tobit's larger demonstration of himself as a righteous person.

Lastly we comment on the socio-economic dimensions of tithing. We have already spoken of how Tobit's outlay may presume some level of wealth. In addition, as noted, Tobit's gifts of

food to the widows and orphans clearly place Tobit in the position of the privileged donor and places the recipients in a dependent position (See further the discussion below concerning food to the hungry in this chapter.)

### C. Gentile Food (1:10-11)

We now come to the second major passage concerned with food and its consumption in the opening chapter of the Book of Tobit. Shortly after his testimony concerning his Temple devotion whilst still living in Israel, Tobit narrates how, when in exile, his relations ate ‘the food of the Gentiles’ but he alone did not do so. Tobit’s avoidance of the ‘food of the Gentiles’ is the food-related episode most widely discussed in the secondary literature on the book. As noted in the Introduction, it is the only incident from the Book of Tobit examined by Gillian Feeley-Harnik in her anthropological survey of food in Ancient Judaism.<sup>165</sup>

#### 1. The Translated Text

1:10<sup>166</sup> After I was taken captive to the Assyrians and when I was taken captive, I came into Nineveh,<sup>167</sup> and all of my kinsfolk<sup>168</sup> and all my people were eating (h!sqion) from the food of the Gentiles (a!rtwn tw~n e0qnw~n). 1:11 But I kept myself from eating (fagei=n)<sup>169</sup> from the food of the Gentiles

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165. Feeley, *Lord's Table*, 97 and 101.

166. No DSS fragments correspond to this unit; italics signal features discussed in translational and text-critical sections.

167. The text is disturbed here (see Robert Littman’s forthcoming commentary) but the meaning is clear.

168. Lit.: ‘siblings (ἀδελφοί).

169. Lit.: ‘I guarded/kept my soul not to eat.’



(a!rtwn tw~n e0qnw~n). 1:12 And when I remembered my God with all my soul 1:13 and the Most High gave me favour and [good] appearance before Shalmaneser<sup>170</sup> and I would buy for him everthing for his use.

## 2. Issues in Translation and Text-Critical Issues

There are a couple of issues that need mentioning concerning the passage above. The first pertains to the translation of the noun ἄρτος. In Classical Greek, this term typically means ‘bread,’ often in the form of a loaf.<sup>171</sup> In Hebrew and Aramaic, however, כֶּלֶם denotes both bread and food more generally and we see this meaning for ἄρτος clearly in *koine* Greek. For instance, the Hebrew phrase ‘to eat bread,’ means to eat a meal and is frequently translated in the Septuagint using the noun ἄρτος.<sup>172</sup> Thus in our passage, the translation of ‘food’ is appropriate (cf. Isa. 65:25; Matt. 6:11). The second issue is a text-critical matter. It concerns whether 1:12 is to be linked with 1:13 or 1:11. In the latter case, as found in G1, Tobit would be stating that he avoids eating ‘Gentile food’ because he remembered God. In contrast, Sinaiticus links 1:12 with 1:13, and thus indicates that Tobit’s remembrance of God results in him gaining favour. OL evidence, however, consistently supports Sinaiticus. The close orthographical similarity between the conjunction used by G1 (καὶ) and G2 (καὶ οὐ) suggests an inner Greek development.<sup>173</sup>

## 3. Sources

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170. The ruler in mind is apparently Shalmaneser V (727-722 B.C.E.), whose name is spelt variously (Enemessar/Enemassar) in Greek throughout the chapter.

171. LSJ, 250.

172. E.g. Gen. 3:19; 28:20; 37:25.

173. Gamberoni, “Gesetz des Mose,” 237, is of this opinion.

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to consider whether this pericope echoes material now found in the Hebrew Bible. We first examine two passages from the prophetic writings: Hosea 9:3 and Ezekiel 4:13. That the behaviour of Tobit's relations appears to confirm these verses, both of which speak about the consumption of food in Exile, has frequently been noted. Ezekiel speaks generally of the consumption of impure (טמא) food among 'the nations.' Hosea, however, specifically refers to the eating of that which is impure in Assyria itself. It is notable, though, unlike the two prophetic works, Tobit makes no mention of impurity. We should keep this in mind as we later compare Tobit's comments about dietary observance with other Israelite and Jewish writings. This includes another passage that the Book of Tobit may also be echoing: Daniel 1. In addition to adhering to dietary regulations, Tobit recalls Daniel both with its court tale context and with the favour that Tobit, like Daniel, subsequently gains.<sup>174</sup> Two medieval Jewish versions of Tobit reflect this as well, as they explicitly make use of Danielic terminology in describing the court ration and defilement.<sup>175</sup>

#### 4. Background

Having discussed possible sources for this pericope, we now broaden our enquiry into how Tobit's food avoidance compares with a full range of writings about Israelite and Jewish practice. There are two well-known lists of dietary restrictions (Lev. 11:1-47 / Deut 14: 1-21) and other prohibitions of various kinds in the Hebrew Bible (e.g. Gen. 9:4; Gen. 32:33; Ex.22; Lev. 3:16:30; Lev. 19:26; and Lev. 22:8). However, with two brief exceptions in the

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174. Francesco Vattioni, "Studi e note," 262.

175. Constantinople 1516 and Constantinople 1519.

prophetic writings, noted above, only in Daniel 1 is there any fuss made about food in connection with Gentiles.<sup>176</sup> Jehoiachin and Hebrew Esther are both depicted consuming palace rations (and in Esther's case, appearing at drinking parties) without comment.<sup>177</sup> It is possibly as a result of the Maccabean crisis that dietary concerns emerge in the forefront in many pre-Roman Second Temple writings, including legendary tales and other stories,<sup>178</sup> as well as documents that depict events with some basis in history.<sup>179</sup> These concerns continue to appear in sources from the Roman period on.<sup>180</sup> Although there is a considerable range in strictness of observance, in many instances, what a Jew or Israelite chooses not to eat is a clear and enduring emblem of piety, as is the case in Tobit.<sup>181</sup> But Tobit nonetheless remains something of an anomaly.

No other document, even those which speak of Gentiles, employs a category called 'food of the Gentiles.'<sup>182</sup> Generally, when the texts speak of Gentiles, including in situations where Jews share the table with them, the concern is that it will lead to improper Gentile activities, especially idolatry.<sup>183</sup> Yet even when the writings are concerned with idolatry, the issue as to

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176. Dan. 1:5-16.

177. Hos. 9:3; Ezek. 4:13; 2 Kgs. 25:29-30/Jer. 52:34; Esth. 2:9, 5:6, 7:2.

178. Addition to Greek Esth. (A and B texts) C:28; *Let. Aris.* 140-166; Jdt. 10:5 and 12:1. Cf. also the difficult to date *Asenath* e.g. 8:5, 10:13/14, 11:8-9, 12:5.

179. 1 Macc. 1:47, 62; 2 Macc. 6:18-31; 7.

180. Philo, *Spec. IV*, 78-131 and *Agr.* 131-145; see esp. *Flac.* 96; 1 Cor. 8 and 10; Rom. 14; Josephus, *B.J.* 2.591/*A.J.* 12.120/*Vita* 74; *A.J.* 14.225; *Vita* 13-14; Acts of the Apostles 10:9-16; 11-2; *m. Avod. Zar.* 2:3-7.

181. Dan. 1:8-9; Greek Esth. C:28; 1 Macc. 1:47, 1:62; 2 Macc. 6:18-31; 7.

182. Ezek. 4:13 comes the closest, but even there it is expressed as eating impure food among Gentiles, not 'food of the Gentiles.'

183. *Jub.* 22:16; *Asen.* 7:1. See also Gal. 2:12.

whether Gentiles are somehow associated with the food is not always stressed.<sup>184</sup> When it does, it does not apply to all possible food and drink but is restricted to certain items, especially wine and meat,<sup>185</sup> and sometimes also oil and bread.<sup>186</sup>

Writings concerned with problem foods generally explain clearly what the problems are; in this regard, too, Tobit is something of an anomaly.<sup>187</sup> The predominant reasons for problems with food in other texts are all interrelated: impurity<sup>188</sup>, association with idolatry<sup>189</sup> (which leads to impurity), and violating the commandments (which includes eating items that are impure or associated with idols).<sup>190</sup> Nonetheless, consuming foods that have some connection with Gentiles is often permitted for specific reasons.<sup>191</sup> Tobit, however, does not supply a

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184. Addition C:28 to Greek Esth. B-Text does not rule out the consumption of a royal portion. Greek Esth. B's categories are based on enemies, not Gentiles; the Sardis decree as reported by Josephus, *A.J.* 14.259-61, which refers to imported food that would, at the very least, come in contact with Gentiles, does not use the category 'Gentile food,' nor does Judith.

185. For Dan. 1:8 the problem is wine and meat, as is Rom. 14; for Greek Esth. B C:28 it is wine used in libation. For other documents ( *Let. Aris.* 140-166 *passim*; 1 Macc. 1:47; 2 Macc. 6:18-31; 7:1-42; 4 Macc. 1:34; 5:1-38; 6: 1-35; 7: 1-23; Philo, *Flac.* 96; Acts 10:9-16; and 11:1-10) the concern is with meal of forbidden animals. Elsewhere (*Asen.* e.g. 8:5, 10:13, 11:8-9, 12:5 (including the idea that the animal has been strangled), and 1 Cor. 8 and 10), idol meat is the issue. *m. Avod. Zar.* 2:3-7 not only supplies specific foods but attempts to offer specific reasons.

186. Oil: Josephus, *B.J.* 2.591; *A.J.* 12.120; *Vita* 74; bread: *m. Avod. Zar.* 2:6.

187. Only in a few instances are no reasons given and they are usually clear: e.g. the refusal of the Jewish women to eat pig in *Flac.* 96; even their attackers knew this.

188. Hos. 9:3; Ezek. 4:13; Dan. 1:8; *Asen.* 12:5; *Let. Aris.* 142; 1 Macc. 1:47; and 1:62; 2 Macc. 6:19, 4 Macc. e.g. 4:26; Rom. 14:14; Acts 10:14-15; and 11:8-9.

189. Greek Esth. B C28; *Asen.* 8:5; 10:13; 11:8-9; 12:5; 1 Macc. 1:42; 2 Macc. 6:21; 1 Cor. 8 and 10 (and presumed in Rom. 14), and *m. Avod. Zar.* 2:3 and 5 (which often supplies multiple reasons).

190. *Let. Aris.* e.g. 161; 1 Macc. e.g. 1:49; 2 Macc. e.g. 6:1 and 4 Macc. e.g. 7:9. Greek Esth. B is not explicit, but may refer to violating dietary laws at king's feasts.

191. Dan. 1:12; *Let. Aris.* 140-166 *passim*; *Jub.* 42; Josephus; *A.J.* 14.259-61; *Vita* 13-14 (1.56); Rom. 14:2), *m. Avod. Zar.* 2:3-7.

specific reason and does not even clarify what he means by 'food of the Gentiles.' He does not indicate whether it is limited to meals prepared by Gentiles, or also includes foodstuffs processed by them, or even raw agricultural products sold by them. As a result his observance appears to be among the strictest on record, most closely resembling that of Judith. Judith brings her own food and drink when going to Holofernes (10:5) and even declines when the general offers to supply food tailored to her dietary needs (12:3). Judith's situation is also comparable with Tobit's in that, Judith, like Tobit, is a free agent who nonetheless interacts with Gentiles. Even Judith, however, has some sort of explanation.<sup>192</sup>

Ironically, the behaviour of a historical Tobiad, a member of an influential and wealthy family of Samaria in whose honour some have attributed the composition of the Book of Tobit, may have been quite different.<sup>193</sup> Josephus depicts Hyrcanus, a scion of the Tobiad family happily eating meat at the court of an unidentified Ptolemy and Cleopatra.<sup>194</sup>

## 5. Function of Food in the Unit

Given that Tobit's food avoidance habits are so striking, it is not surprising that they play an important role in the story. Like tithing, avoiding 'Gentile food' is a prominent illustration of Tobit's piety. As the only other deed in which he is distinguished from the rest of his relations, it is put on a par with his devotion to the Temple. In addition, depending on one's

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192. Judith (Jdt. 12:2) gives the reason that it might be a σκάνδαλος, a term that could mean 'stumbling block' or 'offence.' This term is also used in Romans. Related terms are employed in 1 Cor. 8 and 10.

193. Milik, "La patrie de Tobie;" followed by Rabenau, *Buch Tobit*, 177-182 and Wills, *Jewish Novel*, 71-72.

194. Josephus, *A.J.* 12. 210-214.

analysis of the relationship between 1:11 and succeeding verses (see Text-Critical Issues, above), Tobit's observance of dietary regulations may have led directly to his obtaining a favourable position in court, complete with a lucrative job (cf. Dan. 1:9), given that food avoidance is the only deed he has yet to perform (1:11-12a).<sup>195</sup>

## 6. Narrative Tensions and Possible Redaction

Considering that Tobit's behaviour is especially linked to Jewish practice, it is interesting to observe that like tithing, another specifically Jewish activity, the subject of Gentile food is also dealt with at disproportionate length (41 words) relative to the other righteous deeds mentioned in this first chapter. Moreover, like tithing, but unlike all other righteous deeds in the opening chapter, 'Gentile food' avoidance' is not repeated again in Tobit's instructions to Tobiah in chapter 4. It has been argued on these grounds that this section is a later development given the increased interest in this subject during and after the Hasmonean revolt.<sup>196</sup> The fact that the concern is already present in Hosea and Ezekiel may serve in counter-argument. In response to this, it has been argued that the Book of Tobit's notable use of the prophetic writings, especially these, may itself be a later development.<sup>197</sup> Whatever the case may be, the overall sense that this unit stands out from the rest of the narrative is difficult to shake off.

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195. So Griffin, "Theology and Function of Prayer," 171; Beate Ego, "Heimat in der Fremde: Zur Konstituierung einer jüdischen Identität im Buch Tobit," in *Jüdische Schriften in ihrem antik-jüdischen und urchristlichen Kontext*, (ed. H. Lichtenberger, and G. S. Oegema; SJSHRZ Vol 1. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2002), 275; Gamberoni, "'Gesetz des Mose'" 237, agrees, but acknowledges the vagueness of the verse (see Text-Critical Issues, above).

196. Rabenau, *Buch Tobit*, 188, assigns the unit to around this time.

197. Rabenau, *Buch Tobit*, 188, assigns Hosea and Ezekiel to the same unit.

## 7. Class and Gender Issues: Women, Children and Slaves

Turning to class and gender issues, we observe that it is never indicated whether or not Hannah or Tobiah, let alone their slaves, eat Gentile food. Whether this is because Tobit represents the entire household or because the forbidden food is only tempting to heads of households, the narrative does not disclose. It is revealing that this information is not considered worth reporting. After all, according to Philo (Flac. 96), Jewish women were especially identified in the Alexandrian pogrom by their refusal to eat swine's flesh. As we continue this study, however, it will become further apparent that what or when a woman or slave eats is of small interest to neither Tobit, the ostensible narrator of the early parts of the story, nor of the narrative itself.

## 8. Leading Characteristics

We now may categorise this particular reference to food and its consumption. There are three references to food and eating here. The first is the food itself, associated with Gentiles in some way, and for that reason (unique to Tobit, as we have already discussed) forbidden to Israelites such as Tobit. The second two food-related aspects in the passage obviously pertain to consumption. There is the accepting of the food by Tobit's relatives and its rejection by Tobit.

In contrast to tithing, the subject of 'Gentile food' and who eats it is definitely in the foreground. It is further highlighted by being the first challenge of Diaspora existence that

Tobit and his relatives face. Nonetheless, as was the case with tithing, Tobit's avoidance of the food remains part of Tobit's overall discourse about his past.

As described above, what Tobit does with food in this instance plays an important role in depicting him as righteous. Again, as we have stated with respect to tithing, Tobit's action is considered pious both in and of itself and by comparison with his disobedient relatives. Furthermore, like tithing, the observance of dietary regulations at some point develops its own special significance as a marker of piety. Moreover, it is worth noting, that whilst the general concept of food taboos is not unique to Jews, in the Book of Tobit, Tobit's observance constitutes a particularly Jewish formulation of food avoidance.<sup>198</sup> Indeed, it certainly has some basis in the Torah, although this is never made clear. Again, as with tithing, this behaviour contributes to the overall depiction of Tobit as a righteous individual.

From a socio-economic standpoint, it should be emphasised that although the dietary laws were and continue to be an important marker of identity in Judaism, the narrative of Tobit does not present the issue explicitly as such. At the same time, the narrative does seem to suggest, as already indicated by the possible source material from Hosea and Ezekiel above, food temptations epitomise the difficulties of living in exile. On a related theme, along with dietary observance, the practices of circumcision and the keeping the Sabbath form an important triad for which Jews were known.<sup>199</sup> It is therefore interesting that circumcision and the Sabbath are absent in Tobit. One sees that later, in 2 Maccabees, the two observances,

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198. Frederick J. Simoons, *Eat Not This Flesh: Food Avoidances From Prehistory to the Present* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994).

199. See in particular 1 Macc. 1:60-61 (circumcision) and 2:29-38 (Sabbath).



though present, are downplayed compared to food.<sup>200</sup> Food rules are unique among the three behaviours in that they are performed once or more daily and have arguably the largest social impact, including women and children, as well as men.

## D. Food to the Hungry (1:17)

The third and final passage about food in Tobit's chapter 1 depicts his gifts of food to the hungry. They are presented as a subset of his overall almsgiving, which takes place during the reign of Shalmaneser (1:16-17).

### 1. The Translated Text

1:16<sup>201</sup> And in the days of Shalmaneser, I performed many [acts] of ἐλεημοσύνη<sup>202</sup> for my kinsfolk from my people. 1:17 And I would give my food (ἄρτους) to the hungry (πεινῶσιν) and clothing to the naked.

### 2. Text-Critical Issues

First, a minor text-critical matter. According to Sinaiticus, Tobit says that he used to *give* (ἐδίδου) food. The OL evidence however is mixed, with two of our best witnesses referring to *sharing*, but at the same time, other versions, especially Reginensis, agree with Sinaiticus.<sup>203</sup> Despite the variation, especially among the two very important versions, there is

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200. Jonathan A. Goldstein, *II Maccabees*. (AB 41A; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 278.

201. No DSS fragments correspond to this unit.

202. Although especially linked with the giving of alms, ἐλεημοσύνη and תְּרֻמָּה (4Q200 4:7, 8 (twice) and 4Q198 14:2) can be also understood as charity more broadly, as may be the case here. In the LXX/OG, ἐλεημοσύνη can also translate תְּרֻמָּה.

203. I used to give (*dabam*): Reginensis, Monacensis, Bible de Rosas, Sangermanensis 15; I used to share (*diuidebam*): Bobbiensis; sharing (*diuidens*): Regius, Corbeiensis. The

little reason to postulate a difference in the underlying Greek. We observe that G1 agrees with S. It is also interesting that Constantinople 1519, which normally follows G1, reads פִּרְשׁ, a good equivalent of *divido*. This may either illustrate the close similarities between the phrases or that sharing or spreading out food might be a kind of set expression. We may also note that the Vulgate uses *divido* (in the third person, in keeping with the rest of the material that is part of Tobit's monologue in that version) but that is insufficient to demonstrate that it was an influence.

### 3. Sources

Next, some remarks about sources. The concern for giving food to the poor that is so feelingly expressed in Isaiah 58:7 may be a direct source for Tobit.<sup>204</sup> The verse reads:

It is to share your bread with the hungry, And to take the  
wretched poor into your home; When you see the naked, to  
clothe him, And not to ignore your own kin. [NJPS]

Each of the elements of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and helping his relatives are found in Tob. 1:16 and the invitation of a poor person into Tobit's home in the next chapter matches the last example. These correlations increase the likelihood that the verse may in fact serve as a source and not merely be yet another example of what (see Background below) could be a fairly stereotypical formulation of charity. When one turns to Isaiah 58:8, it is as if Tobit's future situation were in mind:

Then shall your light burst through like the dawn And your  
healing spring up quickly; Your Vindicator ( צַדִּיק ) shall march

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motif of sharing may be derived from Isa. 58:7 (see below)

204. Rabenau, *Buch Tobit*, 149.

before you, the Presence of the LORD shall be your rear guard  
[NJPS, emphasis added.]

In fact, as Rabenau has demonstrated, in Tobit's present form, there is an extensive intertextual connection between Tobit and Isaiah 58:6-11.<sup>205</sup> This link did not go unobserved.

A medieval Jewish version of Tobit makes the connection between 1:16 and Isaiah 58:7 fully explicit by drawing directly upon the wording of Isaiah.<sup>206</sup>

#### 4. Background

Next, some background information about this particular activity. Feeding the hungry, frequently paired with clothing the naked, is a stereotypical form of charity in Egyptian<sup>207</sup> and Babylonian<sup>208</sup> wisdom literature, as well as in *Ahiqar*.<sup>209</sup> Examples from Jewish and Christian sacred writings include Isaiah 58:7; Ezekiel 18:5-9; Job 22:7; 31:16-19; Matthew 25: 31-46; *Sibylline Oracles* Book 3: 240; *T.-Job* 10:1-7; *T. Issachar* 7:5; *T. Joseph* 3:5; and

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205. Rabenau, *Buch Tobit*, 151-154.

206. 'Otsar Haqoddesh draws on and reworks the phrases פָּרַם לָרֵעַב לַחֲמֵךְ and חָרָאָה עָרִים from Isa. 58:7.

207. Instruction of Ani in Vol II of Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973-1980), pages 141-142, 143 and especially the Instruction of Papyrus Insinger in Vol III, Lichtheim, *AEL*, 16, 3-5 (page 198) esp. 13: 'He who gives food to the poor, the god takes him to himself in boundless mercy'; the Papyrus is dated to the Ptolemaic period (page 184). To be sure, some even earlier Egyptian writings are relevant because they were still being copied for more than a thousand years (Ronald J. Williams, "The Sage in Egyptian Literature," in *The Sage in Israel and The Ancient Near East*. (ed. J. G. Gammie, and L. G. Perdue. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 24,

208. E.g. 'Babylonian Theodicy,' lines 181-82; 185-86 (W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960. 81); Counsels of Wisdom,' *BWL* 61-65; contest between a palm and a tamarisk, *BWL*, 153.

209. Slavonic *Ahiqar* in Conybeare et al., *Ahikar*, p.11 no. 120; this version clearly, however, is influenced by later tradition, from Saracens (no. 82) to Samson (no.113).

2 *Enoch* 9:1; 10:5; and 63. It is particularly notable that in *Ezekiel* 18:5-9 these actions are part of a definition of what it means to be righteous (צדִיק).

## 5. Function of Food in the Unit

Now we turn to the role played by food and its consumption in the passage. Like tithing and avoiding ‘Gentile food,’ what Tobit does with food supports the overall claim he makes that he is righteous individual. Tobit’s gift of food to the hungry may be seen as pious in at least four ways. First of all, feeding the poor is a good deed in and of itself. Second, it is also a characteristic and widely attested form of charity, one that is significant marker of piety. Third, whether or not *Isaiah* 58:7 is understood to be a source, it conforms to a prophetic vision of social justice (even if it is not as effective as we might wish, see below). Fourth, also as expressed in *Isaiah*, it is an illustration of Tobit helping his relatives. Tobit’s feeding of the hungry also has a broader function. It links up with his giving of the poor tithe earlier in the chapter, a theme that is continues to be significant in the succeeding chapters. In chapter 2, Tobit’s wish to invite a poor person to join him at his festival meal will have serious consequences (2:2-10). In chapter 4, Tobit will advise his son Tobiah to follow him in feeding the hungry and clothing the naked (4:16). Last, but not least, Tobit’s activity behaves as a specific illustration of ἐλεημοσύνη/תְּדַבָּר, which, as noted above can be understood as charity more broadly, as *Tob.* 1:16-17 seems to take it.

## 6. Narrative Tensions and Possible Redaction

We have already noted that Tobit’s two previous food-linked actions, tithing and avoiding ‘Gentile food,’ both are in tension with the surrounding narrative at various levels, both are

specifically Jewish in formulation and that both also are not repeated again in Tobit's instructions of chapter 4. Given these observations, it is interesting that Tobit's account of giving food to the hungry is different on all three counts. It describes an action that is not necessary Jewish, has fewer problems of tension and is indeed repeated (along with clothing the naked) in chapter 4.

This is not to say that there are not still some points of redactional interest. When Tobit returns again to the subject of giving food to the hungry in his instruction to Tobiah, he does so with one very important difference from how he speaks of it in this chapter. Unlike in chapter 1, in chapter 4, Tobit does not delimit the activity to Israelites. We see that this difference is due to material in 1:16, which introduces the overall subject of ἐλεημοσύνη/צדקה. It is within the beginning of 1:16 that we find the problems. It is there that there appears to be a rupture in the narrative, suddenly reverting to an earlier time. Tobit's actions of ἐλεημοσύνη/צדקה, which as presented in Tobit's current form, include his gifts of food to the hungry, are said to have occurred in the time of Shalmaneser. This is a massive problem because Shalmaneser's death and Sennacherib's succession have just been reported in the verse before, 1:15.<sup>210</sup> As we have pointed out in the Sources section, following Rabenau, one of features that makes 1:16 seem to have Isaiah 58:7 in mind is the idea that one should look after one's kinsfolk. Given all the textual evidence we have just noted, Rabenau's suggestion that the connection with Isaiah (and thus all the resulting tensions in the text) may very well

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210. Rabenau, *Buch Tobit*, 12; Rabenau also makes interesting observations about variants in the spelling of Shalmaneser's name that we have already noted., although this is difficult to reconstruct with Semitic texts.

be as a result of redactional activity is worth taking seriously.<sup>211</sup> Note further, that this is the second time in which prophetic material may arguably lie behind a part of Tobit that some scholars have suggested may be a later development.

## 7. Class and Gender Issues: Is Feeding the Best Way to Help the Poor?

We now come to an important consideration of the efficacy of Tobit's charitable actions. Mary Douglas acknowledges that feeding the poor may be popular, but it is probably not the most effective way to help them:

People think the poor are hungry: why? Giving food is the easiest and cheapest form of charity and it pleases the producers. But that would hardly explain its prestige as the noblest form of almsgiving. What about the undoubted fact that it is the least radical solution to problems of poverty; it is harder by far to reorganise society so that those who are excluded can be brought back into the system of reciprocal exchanges which is the basis of friendship and support. . . . To translate a social loss into a physiological lack and then to remedy the latter is mere evasion. It ensures the poor will always be there.<sup>212</sup>

Such an awareness of both the ease and limitations of addressing poverty through this kind of charity is clearly lost upon the narrative and its senior protagonist. To be fair, however, to the story and its characters, the Book of Tobit is not intended to be a serious reflection about the eradication of poverty.

Moreover, whilst Lawrence Wills also acknowledges that the patron-client relations

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211. Rabenau, *Buch Tobit*, 151-154.a

212. Mary Douglas, "Food as a System of Communication," in *In the Active Voice*. London: Routledge, 1982), 119; cf. Deut. 15:11/Mark 14:7.

embodied in Tobit keep the poor perpetually dependent, he nonetheless indicates that they offer some positive benefits, and may reflect a genuine concern for the poor.<sup>213</sup> All the same, however, it is worth keeping in mind that Tobit's account of his giving obviously focuses upon *his* position as *giver* more than on the welfare of the recipients.

## 8. Leading Characteristics

We may now sum up the main traits of Tobit's gift of food to the hungry. There are three elements of relevance here: (1) the people who do not have enough food and are therefore hungry (2) the food that Tobit gives to these people and (3) the position of Tobit as a giver of food.

Within a literary dimension, the food element is stressed more strongly than as is the case with the tithes, but is not fully in the foreground. As discussed above, the main emphasis is upon Tobit as a giver within the larger context of almsgiving as a whole. The action, like the other two examined in this chapter, is in the form of a flashback and as part of discourse.

Again, as was the case with tithing and avoiding 'Gentile food,' feeding the hungry is pious deed. As we have noted, it is not only linked to the all-important deed of ἐλεημοσύνη/תְּרוּמָה, it is in itself a stereotypical form of it. We have seen in the previous section that Tobit's interest in describing this deed lies not in a concern for the hungry so much as a yet another demonstration of himself behaving as a righteous individual. Also, we have seen that although certainly an encouraged practice among Israelites and Jews (e.g. Lev. 19:9-10) it

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213. Wills, *Jewish Novel*, 89.

was certainly not limited to them. The presentation in the current form of Tobit, however, is Israelite/Jewish in that Tobit limits his charity to his own people in exile (1:16). (This does not appear to have been standard Jewish practice in the Diaspora later, insofar as one can rely upon rabbinic sources. The Gemara indicates that impoverished Gentiles were aided by community monies.<sup>214</sup> Much later, the 16th century Shulchan Aruch continues to encourage this practice.<sup>215</sup> Even more significantly, as we have noted above, (Redaction/Narrative Tension) there is no such delimitation in 4:16.)

As to the socio-economic dimension, we have found that the sort of charity Tobit performs is not free from criticism. It creates an unequal power relationship that not only bypasses the deeper basis of poverty but also reifies it. There is no inkling of the famous later position of Maimonides that the highest form of charity is to provide self-sufficiency (*Mattenot Ani'im* 10: 7-14).<sup>216</sup>

## E. Conclusion

Tithing, avoiding 'Gentile food,' and feeding the hungry -- each of these deeds, recalled by Tobit as a flashback as part of his opening discourse are important to his portrait of himself as a pious man, the central claim made by Tobit in the opening chapter as a whole. Stated differently, each of these food-related activities has as its primary role to support the broader

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214. *b. Git. 61a* (albeit in the interests of avoiding conflict; of further relevance to Tobit, the passage also speaks of burying their dead).

215. Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah Chapter 19, 251:1-2.

216. Part of Book 7 of the Mishneh Torah, *Sefer Zera'im*, also numbered 10:10 -14.



aims of the unit as a whole. Tithing is key to the description of Tobit's piety whilst he still lived in the land of Israel. It shows his unusual devotion to the Jerusalem Temple which distinguishes him from his fellow tribe-members. The extensiveness and near completeness of his offerings are also a marker of piety in and of themselves. Tobit's avoidance of 'Gentile food' is also a major indicator of Tobit's piety. It is the very first action he is described as taking in Exile. It likewise distinguishes him from his relatives and likewise emerges as a major marker of piety in Judaism. Depending on how one reads the passage, it may have even led to a favourable position in court as a reward from YHWH. Lastly, Tobit's observance of dietary regulations is formulated in such a way as it could be interpreted as among the most strict on record. Tobit's feeding of the hungry, in turn, is also an important illustration of his righteous behaviour. Not only is it presented as a subset of almsgiving, a central pious deed in the current form of the story, it is widely attested as a stereotypical form of charity among both Israelites/Jews and other peoples.

The commonality of function among these three references is even more striking when we consider their diversity. Tithing is about giving food and although consumption is an important part of it in most formulations, partly because of various text-critical problems, this is less apparent here. In any case, however, the food-like aspect of tithing is not in focus. In contrast, the matter of Tobit's avoidance of 'Gentile food' is especially concerned with the act of consumption. Tobit's gift of food to the hungry partially recalls his support of the widows and orphans as part of tithing, but even in this case, food is more prominent, especially since the recipients are explicitly considered to be hungry.

Our examination of these three references to food and its consumption has produced other useful observations. We have shown that in the area of translation of Tobit's offerings, modern commentators would do well to reread the ample and outstanding German scholarship (Eissfeldt, Schumpp, Gamberoni) as well as the available primary sources with regard to the translations of ἀπαρχή and πρωτογένημα. Moreover, with respect to προσηλύτος they should reread Zimmermann and the available primary sources.

With regard to redaction, it is striking that both tithing and avoiding 'Gentile food', although different in the ways noted above, do share a number of features. Both are specifically Jewish in their formulation. (This is also the case with food to the hungry in this chapter, but not in chapter 4, so we can conclude that this not a definitive feature). Both take up a disproportionately large amount of space relative to other righteous deeds in the unit. Both may be interpreted as incredibly strict. Both break up the narrative flow in some way. Lastly and perhaps most importantly, both are the only righteous deeds that are not repeated again in Tobit's instruction to his son Tobiah in chapter 4 (although admittedly 4:3-19 describes some activities not mentioned in earlier chapters). We have also seen that the idea that Tobit is feeding only the hungry of his own people may be a later development in the story.

With regard to sources, we have shown that Tobit's tithing procedures are based on the Torah. However, Tobit employs a type of harmonising of Numbers, Leviticus and Deuteronomy that is not found within the Hebrew Bible, not even among post-exilic writings, but that is comparable to that of non-canonical Jewish writings of the Second Temple period and onwards. We have also suggested that Hosea and Ezekiel, as well as Daniel, may lie

behind the Tobit's statements about Gentile food in the form that we find them. Lastly, at least in its current form, there may be inter-textual connection between 1:16 and Isaiah's famous cry for social justice.

From the standpoint of class, gender, and other socio-economic issues we find that although there is an instance of a female relative instructing because Tobit's father is dead, we do not see women actually distributing food even though there is very strong evidence that they did so, and that in fact it was an activity associated with them. We have also noted that Tobit's tithing practices may suggest wealth and that his gifts of food to the poor keep them perpetually dependent upon him. We also have pointed out that (although this is stressed by many a commentator) neither the Book of Tobit nor its pious narrator view the subject of 'Gentile food' as one concerned with identity.

We lastly come to the complex matter of authorial intentionality, which, as we have stated at the outset of this study, may not be the most helpful question to ask. Lawrence Wills has suggested that 'Tobit 1 is . . . purely straightforward in its perspective. It does not give any indication that an intentional overemphasis on piety is being introduced.'<sup>217</sup> Wills is probably correct that the perspective is straightforward insofar that Tobit is not being portrayed satirically (*pace* David McCracken) as he relates all the good deeds he has performed. At the same time, as we have shown, a close examination of Tobit's food-linked behaviours does reveal Tobit as extraordinarily pious in two out of three cases.<sup>218</sup> Tobit's extensive and likely

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217. Wills, *Jewish Novel*, 86n38.

218. Demetrius R. Dumm, "Tobit (Tobias) Book of," *JBC*, 621.

expensive payment of edible offerings (one of which he eats), directed to a Temple to which one would not expect him to be loyal, places him at the upper limit of piety, as does his unusually strict avoidance of the 'food of the Gentiles.' His gift of food to the hungry, although less extreme, is so archetypical that it conveys his righteousness just as effectively. As we continue to examine the Book of Tobit, we need to keep asking if it is possible to determine whether the narrative and Tobit and narrator are 'laying it on thick' with respect to Tobit's piety. This brings us to the next chapter, which is of major importance to this theme.

## Chapter Three: The Shavuot Meal, Its Aftermath and Sarah's Parallel Woes (Tob. 2-3)

### A. Introduction

Having laid the necessary foundations in the opening chapter, the story is now ready to present the two crises that need to be resolved. These are Tobit's blindness, which is caused by bird-droppings falling into his eyes and Sarah's husband-murdering demon that has widowed her seven times over. As both Tobit and Sarah pray for death, the two prayers reach heaven simultaneously. Consequently Raphael is sent down to earth to help cure both petitioners as well as help Tobiah marry Sarah. Within chapter 2, food and its consumption are of major importance. From the beginning of the chapter up until the point just before Tobit is blinded, much of the action revolves around or is in reaction to a meal. The meal itself is also significant in that it is in celebration of Shavuot. Other food-linked references in chapter 2 include the bird-dung that blinds Tobit and the account of how Tobit's nephew Ahiqar and then Tobit's spouse Hannah support Tobit. The last reference to food in the chapter occurs as part of Tobit's unfair accusation that Hannah has stolen a goat, which he frames in terms of whether stolen food can be eaten. In contrast to the numerous references to food and its consumption in chapter 2, in the succeeding chapter food is never mentioned.<sup>219</sup>

### B. The Shavuot Meal (2:1-7)

As chapter 2 opens, Tobit is reunited with his family after being separated from them when

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219. Tobit continues as the ostensible narrator until 3:7, when an omniscient third person speaker takes over.

Sennacherib punished him for giving his dead compatriots a suitable burial. He prepares to celebrate Shavuot with a nice, plentiful festive meal. He tries to invite a poor, pious guest to join him in celebration but instead buries a corpse in sorrow. This, unfortunately, is only the beginning of what is in store for him. Altogether, Tobit's account of his Shavuot meal is filled with details about food, eating, and general dining practices. This includes the meal (2:1, 4), food (2:2, 5), consumption (2:1, 2, 4, 5) and practices such as reclining (2:1), bringing in a table (2:2) and wishing to invite a guest (2:2).

## 1. The Translated Text

2:1<sup>220</sup> And under King Esarrhadon I returned to my home, and my wife Hannah and Tobiah my son were restored to me and *on Pentecost our festival*<sup>221</sup> *which is the sacred [festival of] Weeks* there was for me a good *dinner* (ἄριστον) and I reclined (ἀνέπεσα) *to dine* (ἀριστῆσαι) 2:2 'And the *table* (τράπεζα) was set before me and there were set (παρετέθη) before me *rather many opsaria* (ὀψάρια)<sup>222</sup> and I said to Tobiah my son, 'Lad, *go out and if you find any poor person among our kindred among the Ninevite captives who is mindful with all his heart and*<sup>223</sup> *bring him and he shall eat* (φάγεται) *together with me.* 'Look I will await you, lad, until you come.' [In 2:3 Tobiah comes back and reports finding an abandoned corpse.] 2:4 And leaping up, I left my dinner before *tasting it* (ἀφῆκα τὸ ἄριστον πρὶν

220. Italics denote places in the text that are discussed further below. For items absent in S, the preceding word or phrase is highlighted.

221. This assumes a dative (as τῇ ἑορτῇ G1); not S's genitive (τῆς ἑορτῆς); note ablative (*die festo*) in most OL manuscripts, cf. Schumpp, *Buch Tobit*, 41, citing Franz H. Reusch, *Libellus Tobit*.

222. ὀψάριον, often translated as 'relish' or 'prepared food,' lacks a precise English equivalent. See Key Terms (below).

223. The 'and' is the result of scribal error; see discussion below.

ἢ γεύσασθαι με αὐτοῦ) and took him<sup>224</sup> up out of the square and placed [him] into one of the small houses until the sun set and I would bury him. 2:5 Then, when I returned, I bathed and ate (ἤσθιον) my food (τὸν ἄρτον)<sup>225</sup> with sadness. 2:6 And I recalled the saying of the prophet, in as much as Amos said concerning Bethel, saying, ‘your festivals shall be turned into sadness’ and all your paths<sup>226</sup> into dirges. 2:7 And I wept . . .

4Q196 preserves the following:<sup>227</sup>

2:1 In the days of Esarhaddon, the [ki]ng, when I returned to my house<sup>228</sup> and Hannah my wife and Tobiah my son were restored<sup>229</sup> to me, and on the day<sup>230</sup> of the festival of weeks [there was] for [me] a good meal (שרן) and I reclined to [ea]t (ל[...ל] רבעת ל) 2:2 And they brought near the ta[b]le (פח[...ל] רא) before me, and I saw (that) the נפתני<sup>231</sup> that they offered<sup>232</sup> upon it were many. [I] said [to To]biah, my son, ‘My son, go lead anyone [whom you] will find of [our] kinsfolk [ ] my son, go (and) lead (him), and come and let him come<sup>233</sup> so that he

224. αὐτόν can refer to a male person or the person’s corpse.

225. On ἄρτον as ‘food’ rather than ‘bread’ see Chapter Two, Food to the Hungry.

226. ὁδοί ‘paths’ is an error for ὠδαί, ‘songs,’ cf. Amos 8:10 שיר and Corbeiensis, Regius, Bobbiensis, Monacensis: *cantica*.

227. See Text-Critical Issues and Key Terms, below, for detailed comparison with S.

228. Read a final *yod*: לבית (with Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte*, 175, Weeks et al., *The Book of Tobit*, 91, Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 130, but not with Fitzmyer, *DJD* 19, 8.)

229. Though English requires a plural verb אהבה agrees with the first subject.

230. Read an initial *waw*: וביום (with the same sources above, but not with Fitzmyer, *DJD* 19, 8).

231. See the section on Key Terms in this chapter below, about this otherwise unattested Aramaic term.

232. Or, reading קרבו as a passive *pual* form, ‘that were offered’

233. Reading ואתה ויתח (with Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon (CAL) website (to be published in full, now located <http://cal1.cn.huc.edu/CAL>) because *yod* and *waw* clearly differ and could be two words rather than one, *pace* Fitzmyer, *DJD* 19, 8 and Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte*, 175 (followed by Matthew Morgenstern, “Language and Literature in the Second Temple Period,” *JJS* 48 (1997), 132).

may eat (ויכל) [together ] with me;<sup>234</sup> and look, I . . .  
2:3 [has been] strangled

## 2. Text-Critical Issues

There are a considerable number of features of the texts above that require some comment. We begin with a relatively minor issue, the name of the festival (2:1). 4Q196 simply reads, 'and on the day of the festival of weeks' (וביום חג שבועות), but Sinaiticus has, 'and on Pentecost our festival which is the sacred [festival of] Weeks. OL manuscripts also share this reading, so it did not originate with Sinaiticus.<sup>235</sup> The extra words in these versions appear to be functioning as a gloss, which suggests that the term was relatively new.<sup>236</sup>

The next issue is more significant and illustrates how G1 and OL manuscripts have text-critical value independent of Sinaiticus. In 2:2, 4Q196 clearly refers to Tobit *seeing* the food; it also uses the word 'many' in the emphatic predicate position: 'And I saw (that) the נפחניא that were brought near upon it were many.' Sinaiticus, in contrast, says nothing about seeing and its adjective is in the attributive position: 'And rather many *opsaria* were placed before me.' Both G1 and OL manuscripts (excluding Reginensis), however, also refer to seeing, albeit with an attributive adjective. Thus the exceptional quantity of the food dawns upon Tobit (the most slowly and dramatically in 4Q196).

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234. This reading is uncertain, as the letters are very faint. Perhaps there is a deliberate contrast between 'so that he may eat' (2:2) and 'strangled' (2:3), since strangling involves killing by attacking the throat, where food is swallowed.

235. ἡ πεντηκοστή, or 'the Fiftieth', does not seem to appear in any Semitic texts describing the holiday; see Simpson, "The Book of Tobit," 205; Bent Noack, "The Day of Pentecost in Jubilees, Qumran, and Acts," *ASTI* 1 (1962), 77.

236. Cf. 2 Macc. 12:32 also noted by Noack, 'Day of Pentecost,' 77.



Tobit's orders to Tobiah to find and bring home a guest for the meal (2:2) require four comments. The first concerns what Tobiah must do. In Sinaiticus, Tobit tells his son: 'go (βᾱδιζε) and if you find any poor person . . . and lead (ἄγαγε) him and he shall eat together with me,' 4Q196, however, has more verbs of motion: *Go, lead* <sup>237</sup> all you find from [our] kins[folk] . . . *go lead and come and let him come*.<sup>238</sup> The second concerns criteria for choosing the guest. In Sinaiticus, Tobit requests a guest 'who remembers in his whole heart,' but the object of 'remembers' is absent. Instead the text reads, 'who is mindful with all his heart *and*. It is significant that the reading of 'and' is not present in the best OL manuscripts.<sup>239</sup> Even more importantly, all OL manuscripts and G1 do supply an object. This is either 'Lord' or 'God.'<sup>240</sup>

Not only is Sinaiticus' reading of 'and' nonsense, we have two additional reasons to suspect that a reading with God or Lord as the object reflects an earlier Semitic form of Tobit. The first is that even within Sinaiticus, we find the complete expression about being mindful of the deity elsewhere (1:12; 14:7 and esp. 4:5). The second is that the problem may be

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237. אָזל דבר.

238. אָזל דבר אָזל; דבר אָזל is a typical Semitic pairing of verbs in a commissioning formula, comparable to 1 Kgs. 18:8 or Jonah 1:2. In S however, the corresponding verb in the first instance matches אָזל and the second matches דבר reducing four verbs to two, but representing each pair of verbs. S has nothing that corresponds with וְאָתָה וְיָחָה; S does not correspond with the alternate readings proposed by Fitzmyer, DJD 19, 9 or Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte*, 175.

239. Corbeinsis, Regius, Bobbiensis, Monacensis, Reginensis: no 'and'; Biblia de Rosas, Alcalà, Sangermanensis 15, citations from Lucifer and Cyprian: 'and.'

240. Most OL manuscripts and citations from Lucifer and Cyprian: *deum*; Regenensis, Bible de Rosas: *dominum*').

plausibly accounted for as due to an inner-Greek transmission error. A popular manuscript abbreviation, or *nomen sacrum* for the Lord in the genitive (κυρίου) is *kappa upsilon* (κϒ) with an over-bar. Indeed, this very abbreviation is found in Vaticanus for this verse and in 4:5 for Sinaiticus. There is however, another manuscript abbreviation that κϒ can resemble: the abbreviation for ‘and,’ consisting of a *kappa* (κ) with its right leg extended. A scribe may have confused the two.

The third issue pertains to whether the guest will be eating with just Tobit alone, or with others in his household. In Sinaiticus Tobit tells Tobiah to bring the guest to eat ‘with me.’ As noted, in 4Q196, the letters are faint.<sup>241</sup> Old Latin manuscripts, including Corbeiensis and Regius, read ‘with us.’<sup>242</sup> It is possible that ‘with us’ was circulating in an earlier Semitic form of the Book of Tobit. This is significant, as, given a reading of ‘with us’, we might be led to suspect that Tobit is including other members of the household for Shavuot, as commanded in Deuteronomy 16:11-12 (but note Abraham as the emphasised eater in *Jub.* 22:6, see Background, below). At the same time, we would do well to remember the strong emphasis Tobit places on the meal as an occasion especially prepared for himself in 2:1. Ultimately, however, the OL evidence remains highly suggestive. This is especially so, given that Reginensis, the manuscript that may derive from a Greek *Vorlage* different from Corbeiensis and Regius, shares this reading with them.

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241. Weeks, et al., *The Book of Tobit*, 345, rightly characterise the reading as ‘uncertain’. One can barely see anything on the photograph.

242. Alcalá, Sangermensis 15, Reginensis also read *nobiscum*; Bobbiensis, Monacensis, Bible de Rosas and citations from Cyprian and Lucifer read with S *mecum* (Cyprian: *meum* is corrected to *mecum*).

The last relevant text-critical concern has to do with whether the word ‘dinner’ is part of what Tobit says when speaking about eating with the guest. Sinaiticus reads, ‘And he shall eat together with me’ (2:2). It is unfortunate that the fragmentary 4Q196 breaks off at this point. OL manuscripts, however, also have ‘this dinner,’ or ‘dinner’ in various places in the sentence; it follows ‘with me’ in Corbeiensis and Regius, as well as, importantly, Reginensis.<sup>243</sup> The variable placement of the term amidst the other OL need not weaken the argument in favour of ‘dinner’ being present in an earlier Semitic form of Tobit, as there may be considerable leeway in translation, especially into a language like Latin. In any case, the most important witnesses have ‘dinner’ in the same place. With this, this additional explicit reference to the dinner provides further emphasis for this important festive meal.<sup>244</sup>

The last two comments are concerned with Tobit's own consumption of his festival meal. First, in Sinaiticus (2:4), Tobit leaves the dinner before tasting it (πρίν ἢ γεύσασθαι με αὐτοῦ). In some OL manuscripts, however, Tobit does not taste ‘any of it.’<sup>245</sup> This draws further attention to Tobit's delay in eating. This feature, however, is not found amidst the other OL manuscripts, as it is notably lacking in Reginensis. It is not clear whether it was part of an earlier Semitic form of Tobit. Certainly, though, it adds even further stress to the importance of Tobit's leap from his dinner. Second, in Sinaiticus (2:5) Tobit eats his ‘food’ in mourning. This reading agrees with only two OL manuscripts; the majority, including

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243. *Prandium* is present in all surveyed OL manuscripts. Sangermanensis 15 also has *panem*.

244. Incidentally, the plural verb to eat (all other OL manuscripts have the singular), attested either as subjunctive (*manducent*) in Bible de Rosas or in the future (*manducabunt*) Alcalà, appears to be an inner-Latin development.

245. Corbeiebsis, Regius, Bobbiensis, Alcalà, Sangermanensis 15: *antequam quicquam ex illo gustarem*.

Corbeiensis and Regius read ‘dinner.’<sup>246</sup> Without insisting upon either being the earlier reading, one may find it intriguing that it is Reginensis which agrees with Sinaiticus. In addition, we may be also at least able to account for these differences as an inner-Greek development. If we look at both terms in Greek (τόν ἄρτον and τόν ἄριστον) we can see how similar they are to each other. The latter in fact includes all the letters of the former. This may be due to confusion between two Greek words that are spelt similarly. Ultimately, the difference in meaning for the story is negligible, aside from the impact of the repetition of the term ‘dinner,’ one that would be the third such instance in some of the OL manuscripts.

### 3. Key Terms

Having clarified matters text-critical, we now proceed to discuss some of the important food-related terms appearing in this unit in both Greek and Aramaic. Comparing Sinaiticus with 4Q196 illustrates how the text of Tobit can create different cultural expectations as it is transmitted from language to language. This is regardless of whether Aramaic was the language of the document from which the Greek was translated.

We begin with the terms used to describe the meal: ἄριστον and ܐܪܝܨܬܐ (2:1). The Greek noun ἄριστον (and the Latin *prandium*) refers particularly to a mid-day meal.<sup>247</sup> In Hellenistic Greek, for instance, ἄριστον can best be understood in relation to δεῖπνον, which often

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246. Bobbiensis and Regeninsis: *panem*; all others surveyed: *prandium*.

247. Both refer to an early meal by etymology (LSJ, 241; *OLD*, 1450), but usually referred to the mid-day meal by the time of Tobit’s composition. ἄριστον has a temporal meaning in Jewish writings translated into Greek (e.g. Bel. 37; Sus. 13).

refers to the evening meal or as an unmarked term for a meal.<sup>248</sup> Given that ἄριστον appears rarely in Jewish translations of the sacred writings into Greek, its presence here may be notable. It serves to reinforce the timing of Tobit's meal (already indicated by the fact the body is discovered before sunset) and communicates both culture and time of day. A modern example of how meal time names are culturally significant may be found in the use of the term 'tea' in England. Among the working classes, 'tea' refers to the evening meal, in contrast to the midday meal, known as 'dinner.' Among the upper classes, however, 'tea' is a 4pm meal (often with cake) in contrast to the midday meal of 'luncheon' and the late meal of 'supper.'<sup>249</sup>

In contrast to marked terms like ἄριστον, and 'tea', the most neutral translation of שֶׁן is probably 'meal.'<sup>250</sup> Otherwise unattested in the Scrolls, שֶׁן is known in its emphatic form, שֶׁןִּשֶׁן (spelt defectively), in an Imperial Aramaic papyrus<sup>251</sup> and in several later dialects. Throughout its long history, שֶׁן has had more specialised nuances (for example, a 'feast' or a meal held at a specific time), especially in Syriac.<sup>252</sup> On many occasions,

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248. δειπνον (e.g. Dan. 1:16, Th. Dan. 5:1, verbal form in Tob. 7:9 and throughout the NT), comparable to *cena* (Latin). I thank Leonard Muellner for his input on this topic.

249. For this information, I thank my native informant friends and colleagues Angela Costley and Stuart G. Jones.

250. Though Fitzmyer, DJD 19, 9 translates שֶׁן as 'dinner,' he grants that it could equally denote 'meal' ('The Aramaic and Hebrew Fragments of Tobit from Qumran Cave 4,' *CBQ* 57 (1995), 672). The rendition of שֶׁן מַבְּחָה by Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte*, 175 as 'ein üppiges Mahl,' may stretch מַבְּחָה too much.

251. Of unknown Egyptian provenance, listing household wine expenses. For a photo, see CIS ii, I. 147 (plate xviii); transcription: A. E. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1923), 182-83, No. 72 (esp. lines 2, 3, 10, 13, 17, 18).

252. ܐܪܝܨܬܐ can translate ἄριστον (e.g. Bel 37, Old Syriac and Peshitta Luke 14:12; Peshitta Matt. 22:4; and Tob. 2:1 according to the Syro-Hexaplaric translation). Jastrow claims that שֶׁןִּשֶׁן in *TgPs-J* to Gen. 43:16 may have a temporal sense, because the

however, שרר lacks such specificity.<sup>253</sup> Related to the terms just discussed are the verbs ἀριστάω and √אכל (2:1). ἀριστάω can mean ‘to eat one’s ἄριστον’ or to eat generally.<sup>254</sup> The verb is rare in Jewish translations of sacred writings into Greek, and thus like ἄριστον its presence seems marked.<sup>255</sup> The term evokes a Hellenic/Hellenistic cultural context. In contrast, √אכל, meaning ‘to eat,’ is never time-specific; cf. φαγεῖν (G1).<sup>256</sup>

We now turn to terminology connected with the arrival of the food. First to be compared are τράπεζα and פתןרר (2:2). Both פתןרר and τράπεζα can refer to an ‘eating table,’ a table in general, or a banker’s table.<sup>257</sup> The τράπεζα, in particular, connotes a Greek three-legged table used for eating.<sup>258</sup> The bringing in of the table in 4Q196, however, also suggests the use of something like a τράπεζα. Second, we comment on the verb used to convey the table’s arrival. In Sinaiticus, the table ‘was set before (παρετέθη)’ Tobit. παρατίθημι is used in Homeric and Attic Greek specifically for serving meals.<sup>259</sup> In 4Q196

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scene takes place in the afternoon (1569), but this is not obligatory.

253. See the wine expense papyrus (e.g. line 1) and *Tg Ps-J* /Peshitta to 2 Kgs 6:23 and *TgProv.* / Peshitta to Prov. 5:17 and rabbinic literature as a whole (*JBA*, 1177 and *JPA*, 549, respectively.)

254. *BDAG*, 131.

255. E.g. Gen. 43:25; 1 Kgs 13:7. Cf. such marked usage also in the Gospels (Luke 11:37; John 21:12, 15).

256. Two remaining *lamedhs* in 4Q196 contain enough space for the three letters to form the infinitive ‘to eat’ (ל[מאכל]). Likely, the same root would be used in both Aramaic and Hebrew.

257. LSJ, 1810 and Jastrow, 1250; CAL; e.g. *TgProv.* 9:2 פתןרר (to be read as פתןררתה.)

258. LSJ, 1810.

259. LSJ, 1327.

the table arrives for Tobit with a third person<sup>260</sup> plural active verb, ‘And *they brought near* the ta[b]le before me (וַאֲקִרְבוּ פִתְרֵי טַבָּח לְקֹדְמִי).’ וַאֲקִרְבוּ does not possess special nuances relating to food beyond the priestly use of the Hebrew *hiphil* verb in the sense ‘bring near’ or ‘offer’ (a sacrifice).

Lastly, we turn to the words that describe the food upon the tables: ὀψάριον and נִפְתָּנָא (2:2) The term ὀψάριον (2:2) is well known whilst נִפְתָּנָא (plural, נִפְתָּנִי) is otherwise unattested.<sup>261</sup> ὄψον and its double diminutive ὀψάριον evoke a Greek world view in which food is divided into two categories: (1) a staple grain product, σῖτος, (e.g. bread), with (2) accompanying food or foods (ὄψον or ὀψάριον).<sup>262</sup> These accompaniments, which as a category suggest pleasurable eating, are not supposed to take centre stage.<sup>263</sup> Accompaniments during the Classical period would include ‘vegetables, cheese, eggs, fish (fresh, salted or dried), and less frequently meat.’<sup>264</sup> In later periods and especially in Athens, both terms,

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260. Third person verbs in Aramaic can represent an indefinite subject.

261. Fitzmyer, DJD 19, 9 derives נִפְתָּנָא from Akkadian *naptanu* ‘meal.’ and translates ‘delicacies’. Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte*, 175, proposes ‘Süssigkeiten.’

262. James Davidson, *Courtesans and Fishcakes: The Consuming Passions of Classical Athens* (London: Fontana, 1998), 21-26, offers a rich, important discussion of ὄψον and its relation to σῖτος.

263. Davidson, *Courtesans and Fishcakes*, 21-26. He discusses a derogatory epithet (ὀψοφάγος) for a person who eats only or mostly ὄψον, but no or little σῖτος.

264. Andrew Dalby, *Siren Feasts: A History of Food and Gastronomy in Greece* (London: Routledge, 1996), 22.

particularly ὀψάριον, could denote fish,<sup>265</sup> although this was not always the case.<sup>266</sup> נפתנא could have the same meaning as ὀψάριον, given that Tobit's use of the table also reflects Hellenic practice.<sup>267</sup> Overall, we can see that the Greek version employs more specific terminology in connection with meals, eating, the eating table, and the setting up of the meal. The effect of these details is to intensify the Hellenic colouring already present in the originally Semitic story.

#### 4. Function of Food in the Unit

With so many terms relating to food and its consumption, it should not seem surprising that food plays such a central role in this passage. Its significance, extends beyond the density of food-linked terminology. The Shavuot meal is both an event in itself and an all-important backdrop against which other events take place. Tobit's initial anticipation of the festive meal, followed by not one but two interruptions, and his ultimate sadness over his ruined dinner are essential to the emotion underpinning of the entire passage. This effect is achieved by the prominent and carefully detailed description of the meal.

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265. Davidson, *Courtesans and Fishcakes*, 28-32; cf. Septuagint to Num. 11:22; John 6:9 and 11 and 21:9, 10, and 13. A reading of fish in Tobit would invite parallels with the fish of chapter 6 (e.g. eaten by both father and son) but is not likely since the observation ὀψάρια are many suggests variety (unless there is a reference to many varieties of fish)..

266. In Philo, *Contempl.* e.g. 73, ὄψον refers to salt and/or hyssop. Book I, Chapter 68 of Origen's *Contra Celsum* also uses ὄψον in the older sense.

267. Aramaic לפתנא and Hebrew לפת also refer to something that goes with bread, albeit with an established etymology linked to the verb לפת (Jastrow, 716; cf. *m. Negaim* 13:9). There is sometimes *nun* and *lamedh* variation across Aramaic dialects (e.g. לחמא and Talmudic נחמא) but that may not be sufficient to make a case here. I thank Aaron Rubin for input on this issue. Also possible: translators may have read נפתניא as the more common לפתניא.



At first the meal reflects the joy of the festival and the family reunion.

2:1 And under King Esarrhadon I returned to my home and my wife Hannah and Tobiah my son were restored to me and on Pentecost our festival which is the sacred [festival of] Weeks there was for me a good dinner and I reclined to dine.

It is at this point that the narrative, which has rapidly traversed considerable amounts of time, slows down to record an account of a single day and evening.<sup>268</sup> The syntax, in which the dinner and its accompanying dining posture are described at the end of several introductory clauses, puts the meal into focus immediately. The quality of the meal and Tobit's reclining position suggest imminent gastronomic satisfaction.

The abundance of the food inspires Tobit to share his meal with a guest, for whose sake he is willing to defer eating (2:2).

2:2 'And the table was set before me and there were set before me rather many *opsaria* and I said to Tobiah my son, 'Lad, go out and if you find any poor person among our kindred among the Ninevite captives who is mindful with all his heart and lead him and he shall eat together with me. 'Look I will await you, lad, until you come.'

The description of the meal continues to move slowly, recounting in many clauses what appears to have taken place in a matter of minutes. First the table is set, then abundant food is

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268. Cf. Nowell, "Narrative Technique," 9.

brought out. These details build anticipation (particularly because the repast is so lavish) for the meal. This anticipation, coupled with Tobit's decision not to 'dig in' immediately and to wait for the guest creates instead a tension in the narrative.

The meal is dramatically abandoned when Tobit must attend to a corpse.

[2:3 Tobiah comes back and reports finding an abandoned corpse.] 2:4 And leaping up, I left my dinner before tasting it and took him up out of the square and placed [him] into one of the small houses until the sun set and I would bury him.

The excitement caused by the sudden discovery of the unburied corpse is compounded by Tobit's resulting abandonment of his dinner. When Tobit leaps and leaves the meal untasted, he communicates the importance and urgency of attending to the dead.<sup>269</sup> These actions, which undo his reclining position and move him away from his meal, reverse the description of 2:1 and further frustrate the anticipation that has been built up.

After removing the body for later burial, Tobit returns and eats his 'food with sadness':

2:5 Then, when I returned, I bathed and ate my food with sadness. 2:6 And I recalled the saying of the prophet, in as much as Amos said concerning Bethel, saying, 'your festivals shall be turned into sadness' and all your paths into dirges. 2:7 And I wept . . .

The Shavuot meal that was supposed to be joyful (in fact Deut. 16:11 orders that it be so) is instead sorrowful. This sorrow is conveyed poignantly by the unhappy way in which he eats

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269. Quick action would mean the body would not become food for animals (Priero, *Tobia*, 73; Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 118).

his food. So clearly is this point made that Tobit's modified quotation of Amos 8:10, which refers to feast days becoming days of mourning, is redundant.<sup>270</sup> Tobit is yet to be attacked by bird droppings, but the ruin of his dinner combined with the killing of a compatriot has already set a tragic note.<sup>271</sup>

In addition to its central role in the narration of the story, food is integral to the performance of righteous deeds (attempted feeding of a poor person and attending to the dead), as was the case in the previous chapter. In both cases it is by explicitly and even dramatically delaying eating and its attendant bodily pleasure that Tobit is able to demonstrate his sense of priorities. His upright character as a person who is deeply, even extremely concerned with performing righteous deeds, which was, already suggested in the chapter 1, is re-affirmed here.

Finally, in connection to the three other meals around which important events cluster, the Shavuot dinner helps structure the narrative as a whole. We shall see as this study progresses that at every major location in the story, there is a significant meal. These other meals include Tobiah's fish supper by the Tigris (6:6) the welcoming meal at the home of Raguel, Edna, and Sarah in Ecbatana (7:9-8:1), and the two-week-long wedding party in the same location (8:19-20; 9:6).<sup>272</sup> In each case, the meal serves not only as a setting for important events, as noted above, it is in itself an important event and is critical to setting the mood. In addition,

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270. An allusion to Amos 8:10 also appears in 1 Macc. 9:41.

271. Nowell, *Tobit* 1002: 'His festival dinner is sandwiched between preparations for the burial and the burial itself.'

272. See discussions in Chapters Five and Six.

as we shall see further, the act of consumption (including the refusal to consume) is important to each of these meals. Also, most of the meals in one way or another are connected with some kind of interaction with an animal that can or does cause harm. As we work through the story, the many correspondences between the various meals will become especially apparent.

## 5. Narrative Tensions and Possible Redaction

We now turn to redactional matters. The fact that Tobit's meal is so good (2:1) and includes plentiful food (2:2) contradicts the statement that he has lost all of his property (1:20).<sup>273</sup> Tobit states that his family was restored to him, but says nothing about his property (2:1).<sup>274</sup> Also, Tobit's modified quotation of Amos interrupts the flow of the narrative, just as he is about to weep.<sup>275</sup> The Amos allusion has been considered important for dating Tobit as a whole because many scholars view it as an unusually early near quotation of a prophetic text, which would presuppose the existence of a canon.<sup>276</sup>

## 6. Class and Gender Issues (2:1-5)

Next, some comments are in order concerning the class and gender issues raised by this passage. As noted, although Deuteronomy 16:11 includes the entire household in the

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273. The plurality of servers in 4Q196, who may be slaves, points to yet further property and wealth; see further Text-Critical Issues in this chapter.

274. On 1:20 as a development: Deselaers, *Buch Tobit*, 424 and esp. Rabenau, *Buch Tobit*, 11 and 155.

275. On the Amos citation as a development: Deselaers, *Buch Tobit*, 26 and 460-1 and Rabenau, *Studien zum Buch Tobit*, 13 and 165.

276. E.g. Ego, *Buch Tobit*, 931. This was first pointed out to the author by John Strugnell through personal communication.

celebration of Shavuot, Tobit mentions himself alone in his account of the dinner.<sup>277</sup> Neither spouse, child, nor slave are described as eating anything, not even separately in the kitchen. In a holistic reading, or reading that treats the composition as a unity, this appears particularly odd because Hannah and Tobiah are both mentioned just immediately before the dinner. Tobit's account erases the fact that women, children, and slaves also possess bodies in need of nourishment. We shall find later in the story (see Chapter Seven of this study) that there is in fact but a single unambiguous reference to the female consumption of food in the entire story. We shall see that even in that case, the ultimate purpose of the food imagery is to bring the focus back to a male character. Moreover, the reference is not concerned so much with consumption as non-consumption. When women and slaves do not eat, their dimension as complete characters with needs of their own rather than being objects of others is reified.

Given these observations about who is and who is not depicted as eating anything, it is interesting to look at how the meal preparations are described. Notably, we find that nothing is said about whoever prepared the food. In fact, even the slave or slaves serving Tobit are not named or even spoken of as people -- all we have is the plural verb. Tobit's dissociation from the entire process of cooking and serving may, reflect an upper-class disconnection from the labour of those who work for him. In addition to the subject of food preparation, the various dining practices linked to Tobit may indicate something of his social standing. In particular, Tobit's custom of reclining is class and gender based, as it is a mark of status,

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277. This is the reading of S; as noted some OL manuscripts read 'with us' and 4Q196 is too faint to decipher; note that Abraham alone, like Tobit, as head of the family, appears to be the only eater that matters in *Jubilees* (see Background, below).

luxury and privilege<sup>278</sup> and often restricted to males.<sup>279</sup> A further note of luxury, moreover, is instilled by what Tobit has before him to dine upon: the presence of ὀψάρια in large quantities.

Furthermore, although 1:10 states that Tobit feeds widows, it does not follow that a female guest is a possibility here.<sup>280</sup> This may be argued not only in light of redactional issues with this passage, but also because, as just noted, Hannah is not even mentioned as eating with Tobit.<sup>281</sup> There is also the broader issue of whether piety, aside from avoiding sexual impurity (see the discussion of Sarah, below), is identified with women in typical circumstances (i.e. not those of Deborah) in the Book of Tobit. The likelihood that Tobit expects a female guest is low.

## 7. Background

We should not overlook that the relevance of food extends also to the festival that Tobit is celebrating. Shavuot is mentioned both in the Hebrew Bible and in non-biblical Second

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278. Katherine M. D. Dunbabin, *The Roman Banquet: Images of Conviviality* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2003) 11; cf. Amos 6:4; the requirement in *m. Pesahim* 10:1 that even the poor recline implies that they did not usually do so.

279. Aside from Etruscans, the best evidence of women reclining comes in later Roman literature; see Matthew Roller, "Horizontal Women: Posture and Sex in The Roman *Convivium*," *AJP* (2003), 377-422; Kathleen E. Corley, *Private Women, Public Meals: Social Conflict in the Synoptic Tradition* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993, esp. 24-75. *b. Pesachim* 108a appears not to favour the idea either when it restricts reclining only to women who are important.

280. Pace, Moore, *Tobit*, 128 and Schungel-Straumann, *Tobit*, 67 who argue so on the basis of the inclusion of widows in Deut. 16:11.

281. See Chapter Six on Tob. 8:1 for further comment on the subject of men and women eating together.

Temple writings.<sup>282</sup> Throughout its development it is consistently linked with food and eating in various ways. It is connected with the harvest, particularly the first fruits.<sup>283</sup> Deuteronomy 16:11-12, as noted already, explicitly commands a celebration (which implies food) for the entire household.<sup>284</sup> Other offerings prescribed by the priestly material and Chronicles include both edible meal and grain.<sup>285</sup> The Deuteronomic consumption of harvest food in celebration of God's bounty remains integral to the holiday as it is depicted in non-canonical Jewish writings of the Second Temple period. This is particularly seen in *Jubilees*, which gives the holiday a prominent place.<sup>286</sup> Especially notable here are Rebecca's gift of new grain cakes to Abraham via Jacob and Isaac's parallel thank offering:<sup>287</sup>

so that he [Abraham] might eat and drink. And he ate and drank and blessed God Most High who created heaven and earth and who made all the fat of the earth and gave it to the sons of man so that they might eat and drink and bless their Creator.<sup>288</sup>

Consumption is also an essential part of the festival according to the Temple Scroll.<sup>289</sup>

[ . . . the] first-fruits shall [be for] priests and they shall eat them in the [inner] court[yard, an offering wi]th the bread of the first-fruits. And afterwards [all the peopl]e [will eat]

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282. See further: Peter Laaf, "חג שבועות, das Wochenfest," in *Bausteine biblischer Theologie: Festgabe für G. Johannes Botterweck zum 60. Geburtstag dargebracht von seinen Schülern* (ed. H. J. Fabry; Bonn: Hanstein, 1977), 169-183.

283. Ex. 23:16; Ex. 34:22 (wheat harvest); Lev. 23:16 and Num. 28:26 (new grain).

284. With no work permitted, Lev. 23:21 and Num. 28:26 also imply a celebration.

285. Esp. bread loaves and flour (Lev. 23:18), new grain (Num. 28:26-31) and non-specified offerings (2 Chron. 8:13).

286. *Jub.* 6:17-19; chapter 15 esp. 1-16; 16:13, chapter 22, esp. 1-9; 28:15; and 29:7.

287. The beginning of this is preserved in 4Q219 (4QJub.<sup>d</sup>) starting with line 36.

288. *Jub.* 22:5-6; see also Jacob's banquet for Laban and his entourage (*Jub.* 29:7).

289. TS 18:11-19:10, which includes the offerings to YHWH (Col. 18:11-15).

new bread of young ears of barley and ears of wheat.<sup>290</sup>

Philo also sees food as the essence of the festival. First fruits should not be eaten until God has been thanked.<sup>291</sup> Their quality is important.<sup>292</sup> Food is also significant in Philo's description of the Therapeutae observing the festival.<sup>293</sup> Josephus' account of the festival (which he names ἁσάρθᾱ) emphasises the priestly consumption of the offerings.<sup>294</sup>

Tobit's festive meal is the first literary description (aside from the ancestral retrojections of *Jubilees*) of a Shavuot meal in the absence of a Temple. As in *Jubilees* and the Temple Scroll, the meal is conducted in the spirit of Deuteronomy 16:11, although Tobit does not explicitly include his entire household. His invitation of a poor guest, although not technically part of Deuteronomy's instructions (which are limited to Levites, resident aliens, orphans, and widows) might also be also seen in this vein.<sup>295</sup> His wish to feed a guest also recalls the later Passover לַחֲמַן לֵחַן liturgy, which as mentioned above, welcomes the hungry to 'come and eat.'<sup>296</sup>

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290. TS 19:5-7.

291. *Spec.* 2.180/*De Septenario* 21.

292. *Spec.* 2.179, 181, 184.

293. *Contempl.* 65-89, esp. 73-74.

294. *A.J.* 3.252; *A.J.* 3.252-3; *A.J.* 3.257.

295. Priero, *Tobia*, 73; Miller, *Die Bücher*, 44; Gross, *Tobit*, 19; and Ego, *Buch Tobit*, 930. Nowell, *NIB*, 1001, is on less solid ground when she claims that the guest is a substitute sacrifice in light of Deut. 16:17, although in a holistic reading Tob. 4:11 might be of some relevance. In this case, however, as noted above, the words of Isaiah 58:7 are a far more precise match as they refer explicitly to inviting a poor person into the house.

296. S. Stein, "The Influence of Symposia Literature on the Literary Form of the Pesah Haggadah," *JJS* 8 (1957), 30 argues for a Second Temple dating; but Daniel Goldschmidt, *Haggadah Shel Pesach: mekoroteha ve-toldoteha be-meshekh ha-dorot be-tseruf ha-nosah ha-baduk ve-tatslum ha-haggadah ha-`atikah be-yoter min ha-genizah ha-kahirit, `im dape-dugmah mi-tokh haggadot ketuvot u-mudpasot yekarot-ha-metsi'ut* (Jerusalem: Mosad Byalik, 1969), 8, states that the phrase in question is at least



## 8. Leading Characteristics

As we have discussed above, there are many references to food and its consumption in this unit. These include the meal as a celebration of a festival, the actual plentiful food that forms Tobit's festive meal, the dining practices associated with Tobit's preparation to eat (portable table and reclining), Tobit's wish to entertain a guest (charitable gift of food/hospitality), and consumption, twice deferred and ultimately occurring as linked with sorrow.

We have also already noted how the meal and all its accompanying details are given a considerable amount of attention. From the opening announcement of the festive meal as a joyful celebration of both Shavuot and a family reunion to when Tobit finally eats the meal in grief, food imagery is without a doubt in the foreground. The meal, an event in and of itself, is returned to over and over again throughout the unit. Moreover, the sheer amount of food imagery is impressive, providing a rich and highly varied account that with its focus and detail brings Tobit's experiences with food closer to the narrative's consciousness. In this way, even though Tobit is still speaking in a sort of flashback mode, the amount of detail and slow pacing, as analysed above, gives the sense of the main story happening in a way that was not the case previously. Ultimately, though, however, as we have seen, the meal and all that it involves function in a supportive role, just as the food imagery did so in the previous chapter.

This supportive role, however, is much more extensive than the opening chapter. It is clear that the use of food in the first chapter of Tobit remains fairly one-dimensional; each reference illustrates a particular righteous deed. In contrast, the unit under discussion here presents the common message that Tobit is pious at a more sophisticated level. We have shown above that many details about the meal, slowly presented, highlight the degree of Tobit's sacrifice when he delays in eating it. Similarly, the way in which the narrative returns to the meal again and again serves to highlight the exciting events of the chapter and so to demonstrate Tobit's righteousness. This especially includes Tobit's willingness to defer eating to await a poor guest and then to attend to dead body. We shall find that later in the story (see Chapter Six of this study) the narrative will again use a major meal both as an event and as place to which it repeatedly returns to structure the narrative and emphasise other actions.

We have already demonstrated that righteousness is an important part of what food imagery does in this unit as a whole. We now turn to specific elements in the pericope and examine the extent to which they relate to the theme as well as comment on their connection to Jewish practice, if any. Tobit's observance of Shavuot is both pious behaviour and specifically Jewish, although his observance in the absence of a Temple is marked. Tobit's wish to share a meal, for which he is willing to delay it, is certainly righteous behaviour and may be linked to the Jewish festival (see Background in this chapter above).

Similarly, Tobit's additional requirement that the guest be pious further amplifies this theme. Some scholars have connected this requirement with the festival.<sup>297</sup> This, however, may be

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297. Luis Alonso-Schökel, *Rut, Tobias, Judit, Ester* (LiSa 8; Madrid: Ediciones Cristiandad,

challenged. The idea that righteousness is a prerequisite for receiving food occurs one other time in Tobit, but not in connection to festivals.<sup>298</sup> These sentiments, moreover, are not in keeping with the later Passover **לחם לחם** liturgy, which welcomes 'all who are hungry'.<sup>299</sup> They are nonetheless found in Ben Sira and elsewhere.<sup>300</sup> We infer therefore, that Tobit's criteria are more likely linked with the broader theme of righteousness and righteous persons in the story than to the festival, especially since we have already noted that the reference to being wholeheartedly mindful of the deity occurs two other times in Sinaiticus. Tobit's second deferral of dining is even more spectacular when he vacates his dining posture to attend to the dead. Both deferrals thus qualify as righteous deeds in and of themselves as well as demonstrating Tobit's ability to 'master the passions'.

Lastly, we comment on some details that have nothing to do with righteousness nor are limited to Israelites and Jews. This includes the food itself, as well as Tobit's dining practices. Israelites and Jews reclined and employed portable tables<sup>301</sup> as adopted customs of the wider world<sup>302</sup> Furthermore, the virtues of neither hospitality/charity, attending to the

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1973), 52.

298. See 4:17 (cf. Prado, *Tobias*, 72). 1:8, 1:17, and 4:16 do not require that the person be pious; 4:16 does not even require that the person be a compatriot.

299. Later, Rav Huna (*b.Ta'anit* 20b) is said to invite guests on all occasions, though cf. also *b.B. Bat.* 9a according to which he suggests that a person who ask for food be checked on first.).

300. Sir. 12:4-5 (MS A Hebrew; cf. longer Greek); cf. (16th century) Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah 251 (ch.19) states that those who deliberately broke Jewish law forfeited support.

301. *m. Kelim* 22:2 refers to a three-legged table; on reclining see Amos 6:4; Tob. 7:9, 9:6; *m. Ber.* 6:6 and esp. *m. Neg.* 13:9.

302. The table is found throughout the *Odyssey* for instance. As for reclining, first attested with Assyrian royalty; it spread into Greece/Greek speaking world (Jean-Marie Dentzer, *Le motif du banquet couché dans le proche-orient et le monde grec du VIIe au*

dead, nor subduing the passions are limited to Israelites and Jews.<sup>303</sup>

We conclude by reformulating some of conclusions we have made regarding the socio-economic dimension. The extent of the meal and Tobit's reclining posture point to wealth and often to the male gender; in any case neither Tobit's spouse nor child is represented as significant eaters in Sinaiticus. This is especially noteworthy, as it goes against the more inclusive instructions of Deuteronomy, but also seems similar to *Jubilees*.

### C. Blinding by Bird Droppings (2:9-10)

Food continues to be an important part of the chapter. In this case, however, the food is not fit for human consumption. In fact, it is the digested and excreted meal of some birds. Having completed his festive meal in sorrow and finally buried the body after sunset, Tobit sleeps outdoors in his courtyard (whether or not he does so because he is rendered impure by contact with a corpse, Sinaiticus does not say). In so doing, Tobit places himself at a the wrong place at the wrong time. He exposes his eyes to the falling droppings of a flock of birds above, which ultimately results in a complete loss of vision.<sup>304</sup>

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*IVe siècle avant J.-C.* (Bibliothèque des Écoles Françaises d'Athènes et de Rome 246; Rome: École Française de Rome, 1982), esp. 69).

303. Karl Olav Sandnes, *Belly and Body in the Pauline Epistles* (Society for New Testament Studies 120; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2002), 127, does nonetheless state that 'Jewish religious life aimed at subduing pleasures deriving from the belly' (cf. Prov. 23:1-3). I thank Stephen Barton for bringing this work to my attention.

304. That Tobit is in a state of impurity is explicitly indicated in G1 (μεμιαμμένος) but not in S or OL manuscripts.

1. The Translated Text

2:9 And on the same night, I bathed and went into my courtyard and slept along the wall of the courtyard and my face was uncovered on account of the heat. 2:10 And I did not know that there were sparrows on the wall above me and their droppings (τὸ ἀφόδευμα)<sup>305</sup> settled<sup>306</sup> into [my] eyes, warm, and brought on white spots [the doctors Tobit visits only make matters worse until he has completely lost his vision]

2. Function of Food in the Unit

These end-products of food digested in the stomachs of the birds are a major factor in the story, causing the first of the two major crises that the story must solve. They also initiate a series of events that lead to Tobiah's journey, his cure of and marriage to Sarah, and his acquisition of wealth. For in becoming blind, Tobit ultimately becomes depressed and wants to die. His death wish, in turn, makes him realise that Tobiah should obtain previously deposited money and so hence embark upon the journey, as will be discussed in the following chapter of this study. The blindness-causing droppings also create structure in the story by forming a parallel with the blindness-curing fish gall acquired in chapter 6 and employed in chapter 11.<sup>307</sup> The power of these food-connected substances lie in their common ability to affect a person's health, whether for good or for ill.<sup>308</sup> This is derived from the ancient magico-medical idea of power associated with natural substances, some of which may be

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305. τὸ ἀφόδευμα is a singular collective.  
306. The corresponding verb is absent in Corbeiensis and Regius but not other OL manuscripts.  
307. Levine, 'Diaspora as Metaphor,' 114 detects another structural connection, 'Tobit leaves the good food, and his body is invaded by a digested waste product.'  
308. See further the discussion of ancient medicine and food in Chapter Five of this study .

edible or in some other way linked to food and its consumption.

### 3. Background

We conclude this section with some information about the excrement factor in the story, which has been treated by some scholars as a comic and unusual element.<sup>309</sup> Medically speaking, it is a genuine danger as various fungal pathogens present in bird droppings such as *Histoplasma capsulatum* can cause blindness.<sup>310</sup> But faeces, including those of birds, were more commonly recognised in antiquity as a medicinal product intended to cure rather than cause illness. For example, it is one of the most popular ingredients in Egyptian and Mesopotamian medical writings and was used elsewhere too.<sup>311</sup> Hippocrates employed pigeon droppings as part of an anti-baldness remedy and even in modern Egypt, donkey dung has been used for eye conditions.<sup>312</sup> Whether faeces are truly meant to be consumed as part of a treatment, as some documents seem to indicate, is debatable.<sup>313</sup> In some cases, this may actually be a way of referring to plants.<sup>314</sup> Although excrement does not appear to play a role

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309. E.g. Erich Gruen, *Diaspora*, 151; cf. David McCracken, "Narration and Comedy in the Book of Tobit," *JBL* 114 (1995) 401-18.

310. US Army Environmental Hygiene Activity Technical Guide, "Managing Health Hazards Associated with Bird and Bat Excrement," (1992), 142 ([chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/ento/TH142.htm](http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/ento/TH142.htm)). A case of blindness happened in this way to someone known to the author's family.

311. John F. Nunn, *Ancient Egyptian Medicine* (London: British Museum, 1996), 149; Pablo Herrero, *La Thérapeutique Mésopotamienne* (édité par Manuel Sigrist; préface de François Vallat; Mémoire/Editions Recherche sur les civilisations 48; Paris: Editions Recherche sur les civilisations, 1984), 53.

312. Ralph A. Lewin, *Merde: Excursions in Scientific, Cultural and Sociohistorical Coprology* (London: Aurum, 1999), 251.

313. The Ebers papyrus speaks of the consumption of the excrement of a bird (326) and a fly (782); Pliny, *Natural History*, 28.47.170 speaks of eating she-goat dung for eye-ailments.

314. Mark J. Geller, "The Babylonian Background to Talmudic Sciences," *European Association for Jewish Studies Newsletter* 6 (1999), 28; on the so-called 'pigeon droppings' eaten during famine in 2 Kgs. 6:25 see Lewin, *Merde*, 81 and 85.

in the purity systems of the priestly materials of the Torah, elsewhere there is a sense that excrement, especially human excrement, is somehow impure.<sup>315</sup> As a final ironic note, in some cultures, a dumping of bird droppings on the head is considered good luck.<sup>316</sup>

#### 4. Leading Characteristics

The bird excrement, the last stage in the digestion process is clearly in the foreground. It is a major player, as it were, in causing Tobit to be blind with the ultimate consequences, noted above, of his prayer to die, and wish that Tobiah embark on a journey. The birds' release of their droppings, although still told in flashback by Tobit, like the actions in connection with the Shavuot meal, nonetheless communicates a sense of the present. That is, the event seems to be a part of the story proper rather than the background information of chapter 1 of the story. Notably, this very important part of the story has absolutely nothing to do either with righteous deeds or Jewish practice. Nonetheless, it still relates to the wider theme of righteousness either by constituting the divine testing of a righteous person (Tob 12:14) or at least raising the question of why the righteous suffer. At the same time, it draws upon ancient and widely attested views about the potency of natural products, especially dung, as we have discussed above. There is likewise little that can be gleaned on the socio-economic front.

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315. E.g. Deut. 23:13-15; Ezek. 4:12-15; 2 Kgs. 18:27/Isa. 36:12; TS 46:13-16; Damascus Document X:10-11; Josephus, *B.J.* 2.148-149; David P. Wright, "Unclean and Clean: Old Testament," *ABD* 6: 736.

316. Lewin, *Merde*, 141.

D. Ahiqar’s Help (2:10)

Our next food reference occurs shortly thereafter. We learn that Tobit, in his state of complete blindness, is aided by his nephew Ahiqar. As we shall shortly see, this may be interpreted to include or consist of Ahiqar actually feeding Tobit.

1. The Translated Text

2:10 (cont.) and I was disabled with my eyes<sup>317</sup> for four years and all my kinsfolk grieved concerning me and Ahiqar<sup>318</sup> *supported* (ἔτρεφέν) me for two years before he went to Elymais.<sup>319</sup>

2. Sources

We begin with a reminder that, as noted in the introductory chapter, the Ahiqar court tale of the ups and downs of a wise man serves as a source for this character. The fact that he is identified as Tobit’s nephew, and thus as an Israelite, is unique to the Book of Tobit. Elymais is not mentioned in the versions of the Ahiqar story.<sup>320</sup>

In addition, the idea that one should support one’s kin in need certainly is in the spirit of statements made in writings that are now part of the Hebrew Bible. This not only includes Isaiah 58:7, as discussed in the previous chapter, but even more directly, Leviticus 25:35, which urges one to support one’s ‘brother’ in time of need. Whether either of these verses

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317. ἀδύνατος τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς, LSJ, 25.  
318. Ἀχειάχαρος.  
319. The only DSS material (from 4Q196) are what appears to be the last two letters of a place name corresponding with Elymais.  
320. See further Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 138.



were deliberately drawn upon in this pericope, however, cannot be proven.

### 3. Translation and Text-Critical Issues

In describing Ahiqar's care Sinaiticus employs ἔτρεφέν, which is etymologically related to terms such as 'food,' τροφή. The verb can denote 'maintain' or 'support' generally, but also 'to feed' or 'nourish'. The Greek is thus ambiguous. Some of the Old Latin manuscripts, however, explicitly refer to feeding, including Corbeiensis, Regius, and Reginensis.<sup>321</sup> OL readings that clearly speak of feeding draw greater attention to the element of food in the unit. Nonetheless, there is no reason to presume a different underlying Greek text. Rather, the terminology offers insight into what the Latin translators thought the Greek meant.

### 4. Function of Food in the Unit

Even if we do not translate the Greek to refer to actual feeding, Ahiqar's two-year-long support of Tobit would presumably include the provision of food, either directly or in the form of money for its purchase. The account of Ahiqar aiding his Uncle Tobit certainly indicates good behaviour on Ahiqar's part. His actions are also in keeping with writings such as Leviticus and Isaiah, as noted above (see Sources). It also continues the profile of Ahiqar as a model of goodness in the story and also as a patron. This was already established in 1:21-22, when Ahiqar's intervention allows Tobit to return to Nineveh, after nearly being killed for burying bodies. It will be further reenforced in 11:18 in which Ahiqar is there to

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321. Corbeiensis, Regius, Monacensis, Reginensis: *pascebat* (with the first meaning of *pasco* as 'feed'); Bobbiensis: *nutribat* (closer semantic range to τρέφω); Bible de Rosas, Sangermanensis 15, Alcalà: no mention of Ahiqar.

celebrate with Tobit and especially 14:10, when almsgiving is particularly commended by Tobit. In any case, Tobit's statement about Ahikar helping out adds a sense of realism to the text, as the question might arise as to how Tobit managed to eat without being able to perform his job. Of course, when we come to the next passage, we will find that the narrative supplies a second answer.

## 5. Narrative Tensions and Possible Redaction

There are two problems here. First, if all of Tobit's kinsfolk grieved over him, it is not clear why some of them did not take over responsibility for supporting him after Ahikar left for Elymais. Of course, with a holistic reading, we may be reminded that Tobit's kin have a poor track record already with regard to Temple devotion and 'Gentile food.' We might then assume that they might shirk this deed as well. Ultimately, however, there is no direct evidence in the narrative itself that this is the reason. Second, 2:10 states that Tobit was blind for four years and Ahikar supported him for two. 2:11 begins with an awkward 'at that time'. It then describes a second instance of Tobit being supported, this time by his spouse, Hannah. Moreover, the combination of 'at the time' with Hannah's activity described in the imperfect, implies continuous activity. The NRSV treats this as an indication that the Ahikar and Hannah were supporting Tobit simultaneously and thus translates: 'At that time, *also*, my wife Anna earned money at women's work.' The impression that one receives from the Greek, however, is of disconnection between Ahikar and Hannah.<sup>322</sup>

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322. Rabenau, *Buch Tobit*, 13-14.



## 6. Class and Gender Issues

It may be worth noting that Tobit recounts that *he* was supported, but does not refer to other family members. This is part of the larger observations we have already made about Tobit speaking of himself and not his household with respect to 'Gentile food' and the consumption of the Shavuot meal. A possible reading is that Tobit is being self-absorbed, or alternatively, was thinking of himself as representative of the household. As we will continue to see, however, although women and slaves, may be highly vocal in the story, they cannot be complete characters in the round if their consumption is not considered worth reporting in a work of literature in which food imagery is important. Instead, they function as objects and foils for the characters who matter more.

## 7. Leading Characteristics

Lastly, we go over the main characteristics of Ahiqar's support of Tobit. Ahiqar's deed is our fourth example in the story that potentially involves the gift of food, the other three being Tobit's poor tithe (1:8), Tobit's gift of food to the hungry (1:17), and Tobit's wish to host a poor, pious, guest (2:2). From a literary standpoint, Ahiqar's support is in the foreground, although the extent to which the element of food is important may be debated. As with other actions in the chapter, although part of a flashback, it occurs as what feels to be a main part of the story.

Ahiqar's support of Tobit is certainly a charitable form of righteous behaviour and we have noted above that it is in the spirit of Leviticus 25:35 and Isaiah 58:7, which both explicitly

speaking of supporting family members. Such behaviour, nonetheless, is certainly not limited to Israelites and Jews.

Lastly, Ahiqar's good deed might presume a reasonable amount of wealth, particularly given his high place in court. Later, of course, in Tobit chapter 4 one finds that even poor individuals are at least encouraged to give alms (4:8).

### E. Hannah and the Goat (2:11-14)

Our final passage relating to food is Tobit's account of Hannah and the goat. It begins immediately after he speaks of the end of Ahiqar's support. References to and ideas about food are central to the episode.

#### 1. The Translated Text

2:11<sup>323</sup> *And at that time my wife Hannah was working for hire [by doing] women's work.*<sup>324</sup> 2:12 *And she would send [the work] to its owners*<sup>325</sup> *and they would give her the payment. And on the seventh of Dystus, she cut the web and sent it to the owners and they gave her the pay in its entirety and gave her for the hearth (ἐφ' ἑστίᾱ) a 'kid of the goats (ἐρίφον ἐξ αἰγῶν).'* 2:13 *And when she/it*<sup>326</sup> *came to me, the kid began to bleat and I*

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323. All that is preserved of this unit among the DSS is 'in [that] time,' (4Q196) with which S agrees.

324. The translation of 'by doing' here approximates the instrumental dative of means in ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις τοῖς γυναικίσις.

325. The phrase 'its owners' apparently refers to clients as a whole who supply material; 'the owners,' the specific suppliers on this occasion. Cf. Reginensis (2:14); Alcalà (2:12); and 'Otsar Haqqodesh (2:14).

326. The subject of εἰσηλθεν could refer to either Hannah or the goat (as in the best OL manuscripts, e.g. Regius: *et cum introisset ad me haedus*).

called to her and said “Where did this kid come from? Perhaps it is stolen? Give it back to its owners, for we do not have the authority to eat anything stolen (οὐ γὰρ ἐξουσίαν ἔχομεν ἡμεῖς φαγεῖν οὐδὲν κλεψιμαῖον). 12:14 And she said to me, ‘It was given to me as a gift above my pay.’ and I did not believe her and I said, ‘Return it to the owners’ and I became flushed (with anger) against her on account of this. Then answering, she said to me, ‘And where are your deeds of almsgiving? Where are your righteous deeds? Behold these things about you are known.’

## 2. Text-Critical Issues

There are two main text-critical matters to consider with the passage above. The first is the same as was examined with regard to the previous unit: does Hannah explicitly feed Tobit? Sinaiticus reads, ‘At that time, Hannah my wife was working for hire by doing women’s work (2:11) And she would send [the work] to its owners and they would give her the payment (2:12).’ All OL manuscripts say more in the first section of 2:12. Five manuscripts, including Corbeiensis, Regius, and Reginensis, explicitly indicate that Hannah worked in wool.<sup>327</sup> All but Alcalà refer explicitly to weaving, and even Alcalà mentions the web.<sup>328</sup> Note in particular, however, that in Corbeiensis, Regius, and Reginensis, Hannah feeds Tobit (*pascebat*), using the same verb as many OL manuscripts employ to describe Ahiqar’s earlier activity (2:10). Although there is apparent corruption in some OL manuscripts, as well as diversity among them, essential aspects absent in Sinaiticus are consistently present, including the idea that Hannah feeds Tobit.<sup>329</sup> Thus, it is possible that Sinaiticus may be

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327. Also Monacensis and Alcalà.

328. The web is not mentioned in S until much later in 2:12.

329. Only Reginensis and Sangermanensis 15 have singular forms of (*re*)mitto, which must refer to Hannah’s sending of the completed web; cf. S ἀπέστειλε. The others have illogical plurals. Reginensis, most cited by scholars, is the most coherent.

missing material that was circulating in earlier, Semitic forms of the story. Reginensis, which may coherently preserve a fuller tradition than both S and other OL manuscripts, reads:

In making wool and contracting for the weaving of cloth, she also fed me from her earnings; what she received and wove, when she had finished weaving, she returned to the owner of the materials and he paid her wages.<sup>330</sup>

The second major text-critical issue concerns the purpose of the gift of the goat to Hannah. Sinaiticus (2:12) states that the goat is ‘for the hearth (or home),’<sup>331</sup> but Corbeiensis, Regius, and Reginensis have instead ‘for eating’ (*ad manducandam*), which in turn has led to a series of emendations.<sup>332</sup> The presence of ‘eating’ across diverse OL traditions may suggest a Semitic basis, although Sinaiticus’ translation is not unintelligible. In any case, it is clear from 2:13 that the goat is considered to be food because Tobit frames the problem of whether the goat is stolen within the issue of whether it can be eaten or not.

### 3. Sources

Having examined the relevant text-critical issues, we now turn to the subject of possible

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330. Translation of Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 139 for *lanam faciens et conducens telas texendas, et ex mercedibus suis pascebat me: quae accipiebat et texebat et cum detexisset remittebat domino rerum et ille mercedem dabat ei*. Of all the OL manuscripts, only Reginensis, like S, refers to these ‘owners’ prior to the incident introduced by ‘the seventh of Dystus.

331. ἐφ’ ἐστίῃ.

332. E.g. ἐστιατόρια (Simpson, “The Book of Tobit,” 207); cf. Old Greek of 2 Kgs. 25:30, Dan. 5:23; ἐπὶ τοῦ ἐσθίειν (Reusch, Simpson, “The Book of Tobit,” 207); ἐφ’ ἐστιάσει (Zimmermann, *The Book of Tobit*, 155).

sources. One such source commonly identified for Tobit is the Book of Job. Not only does the woman married to Job question his theological world view, in the Old Greek version, she also works for hire.<sup>333</sup> Somewhat less certain is Genesis 38. The frequent use of the phrase 'kid of goats' as a payment for a woman, suggests to some scholars an explicit allusion to the story of Tamar and Judah in that chapter.<sup>334</sup> From this they consider the possibility that Tobit fears that Hannah has somehow sexually compromised herself to obtain the goat. Although this may at first blush seem rather far-fetched, it is suggestive. In addition to the elements brought up by these scholars, we might also note that both texts contain other common themes. Both women are accused of something: Hannah of theft and Tamar of engaging in prostitution. Although Judah does not accuse Tamar the way Tobit accuses Hannah, he does order her death. In both cases, moreover, the women, not the men, are in the right. Hannah has not stolen and Tamar's activities, although sexual, are because Judah has failed to marry her to his son. Even more significantly, when Judah realises that Tamar is correct he tells her so using the phrase 'you are more just than I' (צדקה ממני), with צדקה evoking the theme of righteousness. Note further that the phrase ויהי בעת ההוא occurs only twice in the Hebrew Bible, one of which is Genesis 38:1. We have already noted that the corresponding temporal clause in Tobit is awkward and abrupt. If, however, the clause is present as part of echo of Genesis 38, then at least we could account for it. . We may comment further that in Athens at least, prostitution and wool-working (the two classic examples of 'women's work') are frequently combined in vase paintings and Hellenistic epigrams.<sup>335</sup> Even so, any connection

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333. Old Greek Job 2:9, as noted by Deselaers, *Buch Tobit*, 378.

334. Zimmermann, *The Book of Tobit*, 59; Dimant, "Use and Interpretation," 417-419.

335. Davidson, *Fishcakes and Courtesans*, 86-89.

between our passage in Tobit and Genesis 38 must remain speculative.<sup>336</sup>

It has also been maintained that the Book of Tobit here deliberately echoes the *Odyssey*. Supposedly, 'one of the few blemishes of . . . [Penelope's] character was the suspicion of theft prompted by Homer's statement that she tricked lavish gifts from the suitors . . . . This is the very charge Tobit levelled at Anna for the goat.'<sup>337</sup> This is problematic. First of all, although it true that Hannah did receive a gift, and although there has been speculation as to why Tobit is upset, the official charge is theft, not trickery. Second, in *Odyssey* 18.270-83, Penelope is not criticised for her ruse, which instead is motivated by honourable purposes. Third, and most importantly, her husband is openly very pleased to overhear what she is doing (*Odyssey* 18.281).

#### 4. Narrative Tensions and Possible Redaction

The goat incident is considered a later development by redaction critics.<sup>338</sup> As already mentioned, the introductory clause 'and at that time,' does not seem to fit with any other part of story, including the episode immediately preceding it.<sup>339</sup> It is also difficult to see why Tobit, proud though he may be and even living in what some might consider a so-called

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336. בַּעַת הַדְּהוּא is more frequent (19 times) of which only in three other places does it occur at the beginning of the sentence (Deut. 10:1, 10; Isa. 39:1). No others have the phrase before the main verb.

337. Dennis R. MacDonald, "Tobit and the Odyssey," *Mimesis and Intertextuality in Antiquity and Christianity*, (ed. D. R. MacDonald; Harrisburg: Trinity, 2001), 17n26 on *Odyssey* 18.270-83;

338. Deselaers, *Buch Tobit*, 26 and Rabenau, *Buch Tobit*, 13-14. See further on Hannah and Tobit's three dialogues in the treatment of Tob. 10:7 in Chapter Seven.

339. Cf. Rabenau, *Buch Tobit*, 13.



'honour-shame culture', should wish to die merely as a result of Hannah's remarks. It has even been proposed that in an earlier form of the story, that Tobit's death wish is in reaction to blindness, not Hannah's sharp words.<sup>340</sup> Such a line of reasoning would be supported by the observation that the account of Hannah's support is in tension with the surrounding narrative.

## 5. Function of Food in the Unit

In this passage, food provides the basic setting and immediate impetus for a false accusation that raises a key question regarding the usefulness of performing righteous deeds.<sup>341</sup> Moreover, Tobit's accusation against his wife comes in the context of talking about food and its consumption. Hannah's work as a weaver supports Tobit, which implies that she feeds him (as explicitly indicated in important OL manuscripts; see Text-Critical Issues, above.) The kid, a bonus resulting from her labour on a particular day, viewed as a source of food (2:13) raises Tobit's suspicions that she has committed theft. He does not talk merely of theft, but rather also he specifically frames the matter in terms of it being wrong to *consume* something stolen. Tobit, moreover, could have indicated that receiving stolen goods is wrong in a number of alternate ways; indeed, in two of the medieval Jewish versions he does just that.<sup>342</sup> As a result of Tobit's disbelief regarding the acquisition of the goat, Hannah sharply questions the efficacy of Tobit's good deeds. Furthermore, according to a reading of the story as a unity (or a 'holistic' reading), this food-filled incident has far-reaching consequences.

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340. Deselaers, *Buch Tobit*, 26 and Rabenau, *Buch Tobit*, 13. At the same time Tobit's sense of shame (3:6) could be understood as a result of what he felt as the indignity of a man being supported economically by his wife (see discussion below of Sir. 25:22).

341. Nowell, *NIB* 1003; Moore, *Tobit*, 136; Fitzmyer, *Tobit* 141.

342. Cf. the Northern French Miscellany and 'Otsar Haqqodesh.

Tobit becomes depressed and prays for death. Along with Sarah's prayer, Tobit's entreaty brings Raphael to earth. Lastly, in this passage at least, Tobit's discourse about food presents him as a character not only distrustful and obsessed with 'scrupulousness' to the point of irrationality. A holistic reading might take Tobit's resistance to accepting the goat to suggest that it is easier for Tobit to give than to receive food, unless it comes from a male relative.<sup>343</sup>

## 6. Gender Issues: Why Does Tobit Accuse Hannah?

It is not at all self-evident from the text why Tobit is so distrustful of Hannah. Nowell's assessment that 'his suspicion reveals both the pain of the helpless man and his extreme concern for obedience to the law' may go part of the way towards an explanation.<sup>344</sup> But for Tobit to display such a degree of suspicion of own spouse, persisting even after she has told him why she is innocent, defies simple explanation.<sup>345</sup> A number of additional reasons have been offered, some of which have already been mentioned. They range from issues of purity connected with animals eaten for a Passover meal (cf. Ex. 12:5),<sup>346</sup> sexual suspicions relayed by allusions to Genesis 38,<sup>347</sup> Tobit's devotion to Torah rules about returning stray

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343. Tobit's self-absorption, (cf. re: 2:1-8a) is further evident in some OL manuscripts, which speak of Hannah feeding 'me' while ignoring Tobiah. Schüngel-Straumann, *Tobit*, 71, similarly critiques scholarship for focusing on Tobit's pain in the episode at the expense of Hannah's need to feed her child..

344. Nowell, "Narrative Technique," 126.

345. Will Soll, "The Book of Tobit as a Window on the Hellenistic Jewish Family," in *Passion, Vitality, and Foment: The Dynamics of Second Temple Judaism*, (ed. L. M. Luker; Harrisburg: Trinity, 2001), 269, best appreciates this complexity; Moore's point (*Tobit*, 134) that anyone can have 'a bad day,' is undoubtedly true, but does not account for the strangeness of the episode.

346. Daniel A. Bertrand, "Le chevreau d'Anna: la signification de l'anecdotique dans le livre de Tobit," *Revue D'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 68 (1988), 269-74; Schüngel-Straumann, *Tobit*, 72, claims also that impurity not ethics about stealing is at stake.

347. See Sources, above.

animals,<sup>348</sup> and gender issues connected with Hannah's status as breadwinner.<sup>349</sup> This last reason requires further comment. A number of scholars suggest that Hannah's activities offend Tobit's 'masculine pride', and trigger his disbelief and anger. In support of this theory, they cite Ben Sira's contention that a wife who supports her husband brings shame.<sup>350</sup> In the current state of Tobit research, the relationship between Ben Sira and the Book of Tobit remains inconclusive, although a number of attitudes are common to both books.<sup>351</sup> Nonetheless, although Tobit depicts a thoroughly male-oriented universe, it lacks the abject misogyny of Ben Sira. Will Soll has also pointed out the following:

There is no sense that by receiving wages for weaving Anna is operating outside cultural and Jewish norms and Tobit's own use of the gendered phrase "women's work" implies that he accepts the suitability of such work for his wife.<sup>352</sup>

Naturally, there can be a distinction between a wife earning money on the side and fully supporting her husband. To say, however, that Tobit is upset because he is not able to work

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348. Most recently, Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 141; this does not fit the situation described (cf. Friedrich Stummer, *Das Buch Tobit, das Buch Judit, das Buch Ester, Baruch*. (Würzburg: Echter, 1950), 12; Fitzmyer also acknowledges that Tobit's 'poverty and misfortune' are part of the problem.

349. See Background, above.

350. Sir. 25:22; Hebrew MS C; Alonso-Schökel, *Rut, Tobias*, 54, Griffin, "Prayer," 92-93, Levine, 'Diaspora as Metaphor,' 111 (Levine also mentions *T. Job* and Judith); Moore, *Tobit*, 132-3, Ego, *Buch Tobit*, 934; Schüngel-Straumann, *Tobit*, 72n31; Cousland, "Comedy in Error?" 543-44.'

351. See discussion in introduction. The question is tied in with the subject of redaction in that the elements Tobit shares with Ben Sira could include passages that might be later developments.

352. Soll, "Window", 268. Spinning was so strongly identified with women's work that according to *m. Ketuboth* 5:5, wives are expected to spin, even if wealth permits them to delegate all other household duties, although the issue is complex. See further Miriam Peskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies: Rabbis, Gender, and History* (Contraversions 9; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 168-69.

(whether linked to his masculine pride or not) is not the same thing as saying that he is upset that his wife *is*. We should keep in mind that in contrast to Ben Sira, Proverbs 31 (which is far from being a feminist text) goes out of its way to praise a wife who spins and sells garments.<sup>353</sup> Moreover, other explanations are possible for Tobit's unpleasant behaviour. The sudden presence of a loud and smelly animal could be particularly irritating to a blind person whose senses of hearing and olfaction would be heightened. We have also seen (see Sources, above) that the episode may be deliberately echoing one or more passages from the Hebrew Bible. Such an attempt to incorporate such echoes could conceivably result in a lack of smoothness.

## 7. Background: About Kids

Finally, some information about kids that may further illumine this episode. In Greece, at least, goats were kept first for their wool/hair, secondly for cheese and lastly for meat.<sup>354</sup> Moreover, since goats do not reproduce as readily as some other domestic livestock, eating a kid was 'a relative luxury'.<sup>355</sup> This was particularly the case because kid meat had an off-taste except during particular stages of their life and seasons of the year.<sup>356</sup> Such luxuriousness may also be suggested by the paucity of references to the eating of kids in the Hebrew Bible narrative passages. Examples such as Genesis 27:9; Judges 6:19, 13:15, 15:1; and 1 Samuel 16:20 occur only in special circumstances, of which two (Judg. 6:19 and

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353. Prov 31:19, 22 and 24 (cf. Schökel, 54).

354. Peter Garnsey, *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity* (Key Themes in Classical Antiquity; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 16-17; Dalby, *Siren Feasts*, 58.

355. Dalby, *Siren Feasts*, 58.

356. Dalby, *Siren Feasts*, 58.

13:15), interestingly enough, involve offerings to angels. All of this information, added to the ancient view that kid meat was very nourishing,<sup>357</sup> suggest that were the young goat in fact stolen, Tobit's determination not to eat would be yet another demonstration of his ability to place what he thinks is right above a gourmet meal.

## 8. Leading Characteristics

Food and its consumption are central to this episode in several ways. Hannah's support of Tobit includes feeding him, as explicitly stated in some versions. The kid given to Hannah as a bonus is meant for food. Lastly, Tobit frames the issue of benefiting from stolen property in terms of eating the goat.

Although, food and eating are important, they are arguably not in the foreground. Rather, the key focus of the passage seems to be Hannah's doubts about the usefulness of Tobit's righteous deeds (2:14) and Tobit's resulting depression. All the same, they are a part of the action of the story, even though related as a part of Tobit looking back.

Although individual components in the story, such as women working and kid consumption have nothing explicitly to do with righteousness, the pericope as a whole is very much concerned with the concept. Not only does the story include Hannah's question on the usefulness of righteous behaviour, Tobit's attitude and words keep the attention on the theme. This is particularly seen in his over-scrupulous concern about theft in general and about not

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357. Dalby, *Siren Feasts*, 58.

eating stolen animals in particular. It is worth noting that although the disapprobation of theft is certainly not foreign to Judaism (and is part of the ten commandments), it certainly is found amongst other cultures as well. Lastly, from a socio-economic standpoint, the gift of the goat places Tobit and Hannah into the position of recipients, unlike how they, especially Tobit, are depicted, elsewhere in the story.

#### F. No Food in 3:1-17

Having completed our analysis of the many references to food linked with Tobit, we come to the depiction of Sarah. Like Tobit, Sarah also prays for death. Widowed seven times by the jealous demon, she has been rebuked and accused of murder by one of the female slaves whom she beats. Strikingly, food and eating, so important thus far, are absent here. To be sure, Sarah receives a much shorter prose passage and one might not expect to encounter this subject in Sarah's prayer (3:11-15), as it is also absent in Tobit's (3:1-6).<sup>358</sup> A holistic reading of Tobit, however, raises many questions. We know that Tobit avoids Gentile food. What kind of food did Sarah and her household eat? Perhaps Sarah's avoidance of sexual impurity corresponds with Tobit's avoidance of Gentile food.<sup>359</sup> If so, however, the parallel is incomplete. Tobit is motivated by his attachment to YHWH, but Sarah is loyal only to her father. Tobit is officially rewarded for his avoidance; Sarah is not recompensed (except that

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358. Food and eating are not mentioned in any of the other prayers in Tobit. Of course, there is no *a priori* reason that prayers in general do not include food imagery, such is found throughout the Psalms, and especially in the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:11/Luke 11:3). To be sure, also, a person with a death wish would be less interested in the subject of receiving food.

359. As discussed in Chapter Two of this study, impurity is typically a major motivation for avoiding Gentile food, albeit not expressed as such in the Book of Tobit.

she finally finds a husband who does not die on the wedding night). Though Sarah's problems and prayer parallel Tobit's in the story, she is not associated with the theme of righteousness.<sup>360</sup> When we put this together with the data we have already collected about women and consumption in Tobit (and to which we will add yet more evidence in our discussion of chapters 7 through 9 of the story), the pattern that emerges is highly important. If what one does with food is a major means by which one performs righteous behaviour, as we have begun to see, and if women are for the most part dissociated from such activity, then the fact that Sarah's diet is never an issue is significant.

### G. Conclusion

Having worked through the passages above, we find that in chapters 2-3 of the Book of Tobit one finds the subject of food and eating mentioned in high relief in some places, yet totally absent in others. If one were to have read only chapter 1 of Tobit, one might not be prepared for this rich diversity and the complex use of food imagery. Whereas in the opening chapter, each food-linked reference was blatantly connected with a righteous deed, that is no longer the case here. In addition to such good deeds and hosting a guest and burying the dead, or even celebrating a holiday, the theme of food and its consumption is found in many forms. Some of these have nothing to do with righteousness, Jewish or otherwise. This includes the luxury food that forms Tobit's dinner, the practices of the use of a small portable dining table, reclining, and blinding bird droppings. Also, although it provides the occasion for a discussion about righteousness, the young goat in and of itself is not necessarily linked to

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360. At most, Sarah shows loyalty to her father's sense of shame in her claim of avoiding impurity associated with sexual intercourse (3:14).

that topic.

The pervasive presence of food and eating in 2:1-8a is essential to the story. The meal, celebrating the return of Tobit to his family and the food-linked festival of Shavuot, is a major event in the story. At the same time, it provides the occasion for a whole series of exciting events in the story-line. As we see Tobit anticipate his dinner, delay it to await a guest, delay it again to attend to a corpse and finally eat it in sorrow, we perceive how the narrative returns again and again to the meal. The disruptions to Tobit's meal foster an emotional undercurrent of dramatic frustration. Working together with the accounts of Tobit's pious deeds (seeking a guest, attending to and then burying a corpse), what Tobit does and does not do with food amplifies his depiction of himself as one who not only performs righteous deeds, but has a proper sense of priorities.<sup>361</sup> Accordingly, although both the Shavuot meal and chapter 1 support Tobit's depiction of himself as pious, the meal does so in a slightly less direct way, does so in a more interesting way, and contributes far more to the telling of the story itself. We are thinking here of such important matters as plot, structure (with other meals in the story, especially the welcoming meal in chapter 7 of Tobit), drama, and possibly characterisation. Food's many functions in this passage raises Tobit into the ranks of world literature, where the imagery of food and eating is characterised by a similar complexity.

Food and its consumption are important in other passages in this unit to varying degrees of

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361. That what Tobit does with food in this instance is important will be confirmed much later in the story in the words of no less an individual than Raphael (see Chapter Seven of this study).



complexity. In 2:10, the potent power of the digested food of birds (the droppings) is seen in the blinding of Tobit. At the same time, as will be discussed more fully in Chapter Five, they, like the Shavuot meal, form a structural connection with the fish organs, an equally potent natural substance that will undo their effects. We also find two accounts in which Tobit is supported (arguably even fed, according to some OL manuscripts), first by his nephew Ahikar (2:10) and then by his spouse Hannah (2:11-14). In the latter case, food and eating operate at more than one level. Food supplies the setting (Hannah's bread-winning) and provides Tobit with the means and opportunity to talk about righteousness (returning stolen property) as well as to be self-righteous (insisting on his accusation to the point of distrust). Ultimately, this food-based scenario results in Tobit pushing his wife into criticising his righteous deeds and raising the crucial question of their value.

With the considerable amount of material extant in the DSS (4Q196), we are also in a position to make comments on issues of translation and text-criticism. Regarding the Shavuot meal, we have shown how there are often important differences between the extant Aramaic and the Greek of Sinaiticus. The overall effect of the generally more specialised terminology in the Greek is to create a more Hellenic or Hellenistic atmosphere. We have also drawn attention to the fact that Tobit's wish to have a guest eat 'with me' could conceivably have been eat 'with us' as some OL manuscripts read, given that 4Q196 is barely readable at this point. Elsewhere, as noted above, we find some versions referring to Ahikar and Hannah's supporting actions as 'feeding.' Lastly, although the purpose of the goat in the Greek ('for the hearth') has been amended to match OL readings that refer to eating, this is not necessary to show that the goat was for food; Tobit's remarks in 2:13 make

that quite clear.

Some comments about redaction are also in order. Tobit's nice meal, the preparation of which seems to imply the presence of slaves (2:1-2), contradicts his claim that he lost all his property (1:20). Tobit's quotation of a saying from the prophet Amos is out of place in the narrative. The remarks about Ahikar's support do not continue smoothly from the references to Tobit's other kin. The Hannah episode seems to be floating in the narrative and the idea that Tobit wanted to die because of what his wife says, although not impossible in a culture in which shame and honour appear to matter, strains credibility.

Turning to the matter of sources, we have found some support for the claim that there is a connection between Tobit 2:11-14 and the Book of Job, especially the Old Greek. We have also examined the controversial claims about a link with the Tamar and Judah incident of Genesis 38. Although this must remain speculative, we have actually found several additional features both works have in common, especially including the all-important theme of righteousness and the falsely accused woman. Claims, however, that Hannah is reflecting the behaviour of Penelope of the *Odyssey* with regard to the latter's appropriation of gifts are, by contrast, entirely unconvincing.

In the area of class and gender, there is much to make mention of. Tobit views the Shavuot meal as 'his' and, in contrast to Deuteronomy, does not explicitly include the entire household in the celebration. Tobit views the support of Ahikar and Hannah as for him, not thinking of other members of the family in this case, either. Furthermore, in Tobit's account of his meal, he does not refer to those individuals who cooked and served by name, not even

collectively as slaves and/or his wife and child. Tobit's position as an upper class male is particularly indicated by his act of reclining, a practice that encodes status and gender. Tobit's maleness in particular, as well as his temporary dependence upon his wife, brings us to the problem of why he accuses his wife of stealing a goat. We have seen that gender issues have been invoked to account for this, and this may be not necessarily be without some basis in terms of psychology (or in Ben Sira), but there is no solid indication of it in the text of the Book of Tobit.

Moving away from Tobit, we note that the story gives no inkling that women, children and slaves have bodies and that they need to feed these bodies. If they do not eat, they cannot be said to be fully independent characters in the round. Instead, they are objects, including serving as foils to some more important character. We see this not only in Tobit's own narrative, but in the narrative concerning Sarah. That the narrative in the form we have it does not find it worth mentioning what Sarah does with food is significant. Combined with already ample illustration that food and its consumption are a major way of expressing piety, by not commenting on Sarah and food, the narrative eliminates a major avenue by which she could engage in righteous behaviour. The ultimate effect is that, along with other details, although Sarah and Tobit's crises are presented as literary parallels, the two characters cannot be seen as equals.

We conclude with some remarks about authorial intentionality. We have seen that an explanation of why Tobit is unfair to Hannah is ultimately beyond our grasp. This is an excellent example of how, in the area of interpretation, we must take a very explicit stance in

relation to how we position our evidence, that is, whether we think that Tobit is the work of one or of several authors. As we have discussed in the introduction to this study, frequently, neither the intentions of authors nor the implied readings of ancient readers are available to us and many times both author and reader will make connections that cannot be located in what we moderns would label as the 'conscious mind.' We can handle this, however, by means of the two approaches outlined in the introduction. From a New Criticism perspective, we would read the Hannah story in light of all other scenes involving her, Tobit, as well as Ahikar. In doing so, we would attend to all the tensions and ambiguities presented by the narrative. With a New Historicist approach, we would examine material that either Tobit is using as a source, or is expressing an opinion that could conceivably be shared by Tobit. In this chapter, we have employed both approaches to a limited extent. The problem with scholars who use Ben Sira to explain Tobit is not the recourse to Ben Sira. On the contrary, it is very important to situate Tobit within its broader context, especially with a work like Ben Sira with which it shares much in common. The difficulty lies in not equally examining the narrative of the Book of Tobit on its own terms (the emic or New Critical approach). Particularly on the behaviour of women, Tobit is different from Ben Sira in some very significant ways. For example, it is difficult to see Ben Sira to speak of a Deborah type figure who acts as an instructor of righteous behaviour (though Sir. 15:2-3 personifies wisdom as a female figure). Furthermore, the recourse to Ben Sira would be further strengthened if it were supported by even one other source.

## Chapter Four: Tobit's Testament and Preparations for Tobiah's Journey (Tob. 4-5)

### A. Introduction

We have now reached the point in the story in which we learn of the impetus and preparations for Tobiah's journey. This journey, which will take place in chapters 6 through the beginning of 11, covers over a third of the tale as a whole. The idea for the journey arises as a result of Tobit's death wish in chapter 3. Tobit has previously deposited money with a relative (Gabael) in Rages. Because he thinks he will die soon, he wants to tell his son about the money. At the same he discusses financial matters, he sees fit to instruct him on how to live righteously and properly, beginning with such imminent concerns as Tobit's own burial (4:3).

Tobit's instruction, which fits the well-known genre of a testament, covers a range of topics.<sup>362</sup> These include behaviour towards one's parents (4:3-4), towards people, including one's own people, (4:7-18) and towards God (4:5,19). Within these instructions and exhortations to Tobiah (4:3-4:19), Tobit refers to food/drink and its consumption four times.

The references include hunger or famine as punishment (4:13) and orders to avoid binge

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362. Testaments typically feature pious figures lecturing others, frequently their children, on how to behave on their deathbeds. Examples are *1 En.* 81:1-82:3; 91:1-4; 92:1; *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (e.g. *T. Reub.* 1:1; *T. Sim.* 1:1; *passim*); and, to some extent, Deuteronomy (esp. Deut. 32-34). Tobit offers a second testament in 14:3-11. For more on the genre see J. J. Collins, "Testaments," in M. E. Stone, ed. *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* (CRINT 2.2; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984) 325-55, esp. 325-26, where Collins refers to the extensive study of the genre by Eckhard von Nordheim, *Die Lehre der Alten* (2 vols Leiden: Brill, 1980).

drinking (4:15), to feed the hungry (4:16), and to place a consumable substance on the graves of the righteous (4:17). After the instruction, Tobiah seeks a guide for the journey and locates Raphael, who, disguised as a relative, agrees to travel with him. With Raphael approved as a companion by Tobit, preparations are made for the journey, which presumably includes the packing of travel rations (5:17).

## B. Issues Pertaining to Chapter 4 as a Whole

It is first necessary to address some issues that are important to the unit as a whole, particularly the material in chapter 4. These are in the areas of text-criticism,<sup>363</sup> redaction criticism,<sup>364</sup> and class and gender issues. First of all, there is a major text-critical matter that must be mentioned. Sinaiticus has a lacuna from 4:6b to 4:19. As noted in the introduction to this study, this is not the only lacuna in Sinaiticus (the other is 13:6-9). Even if we were not already aware of the numerous copying mistakes already encountered with Sinaiticus, it would still seem most likely that the absence of the material is due to scribal error.<sup>365</sup> This is because (as we shall see in the Translated Texts, below) these verses are attested in the other G2 witness (minuscule 319) and among the manuscripts in the related OL text tradition. Thus the verses pertaining to food and its consumption likely circulated in earlier Semitic forms of Tobit. Accordingly, there is good reason to analyse these verses as part of this study.

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363. No DSS material is attested for the verses in Tobit's testament concerned with food and eating.

364. For the absence of any mention of dietary laws in Chapter 4, see discussion of chapter 1 in Chapter Two.

365. Noted early on by Simpson, *APOT* I: 211; Thus text-critical analysis opposing S with Vaticanus by Wills, *Jewish Novel*, 89 is problematic.

Second, we should say a little about the possible evidence for redactional activity in the unit.

As a list, the testament creates an environment facilitating further development.<sup>366</sup> Indeed, at points the testament does not flow well and possesses numerous non-sequiturs. The discussion of endogamy may serve as an example. There appear to be two distinct ideas about the matter. 4:13 refers to marriage within one's compatriots or people (ἀπὸ τῶν ἀδελφῶν σου καὶ τῶν υἱῶν καὶ θυγατέρων τοῦ λαοῦ σου) whilst 4:12 is even more specific (perhaps taking its cue from the marriage practice of the Genesis patriarchs), including marriage from 'seed of your fathers (σπέρματος τῶν πατέρων σου)' and 'from the tribe of your father (ἐκ τῆς φυλῆς τοῦ πατρός σου)'. Applying Talmudic reasoning, we would find it strange to have a specific case preceding the more general rule. In Chapter Six of this study we will demonstrate on the basis of references to food that this concern for marrying within the family is in tension with other statements made in the story.

Lastly, Tobit's testament is also an important source for the subject of class and gender in the story. Accordingly, some general points are in order. Although scholars are not wrong to see Tobit's instructions as illustrative of the world of an upper class landowner, Tobit's testament is actually more complex than such description would suggest.<sup>367</sup> Some of the behaviour described does presuppose a certain socio-economic position, such as the injunction not to delay paying wages (4:14). The remarks about almsgiving, however, could apply to people

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366. Though Moore, *Tobit*, 175, still maintains a single author, even he admits that 4:4-19 is 'disruptive.'

367. The observations of Morton Smith, *Palestinian Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 159, 163, and 190 and Wills, *Jewish Novel*, 89 thus require some nuance.

in different circumstances. In 4:16, Tobit speaks of giving away what is in surplus (which is expected of a person of wealth), but in 4:8, he allows for the possibility of having either few possessions or many. Naturally, this question is closely interconnected with that of redaction. Consequently, future studies may profit by looking for a relationship between narrative tensions and presumed socio-economic status.

From another angle, it is worth also noting that many of the commandments in the testament could be performed by women or slaves, such as not doing to another what is hateful to oneself (4:15). Sarah clearly observes the commandment to bless God (Tob. 3:11 cf. 4:19) and arguably attempts to avoid *porneia* (Tob. 3:14 cf. 4:12).<sup>368</sup> The four references to food could also in theory apply to people of more than one socio-economic position or gender. Surely, women and slaves could be lazy, get drunk, feed the hungry, or put consumable substances upon graves.<sup>369</sup> As presented in the testament, however, performing (or avoiding) these actions are the duties of Tobit and Tobiah. These two individuals are respectively the present and future male heads of upper class households, even if they may be temporarily impoverished (Tob. 4:21). To be sure, Sarah does later receive a brief instruction to honour her father-in-law and treat him as a parent (Tob. 10:12). Furthermore, Tobiah is likewise supposed to honour his in-laws and honour them as parents (Tob. 10:12-13). There nonetheless remains an important difference. Unlike Tobiah, that is all the instruction Sarah receives, aside from when Raguel merely speaks vaguely of hearing a 'good report (ἀγαθὸν

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368. *Porneia* is notoriously difficult to define, aside from it being some kind of forbidden sexual behaviour (see e.g. *BDAG*, 854).

369. It is interesting to note that King Lemeul is advised by a female speaker (his mother!) to avoid drunkenness and to care for the needy (Prov. 31: 4-9).



ἀκοήν)’ of her (10:12). Thus, Sarah's instruction is effectively about how she is transferred from one household to another.<sup>370</sup>

### C. Hunger (or Famine) as Punishment (4:13)

We begin with an instruction that maintains that laziness will result in a punishment of a lack in food. Prior to this statement is a remark concerning the dangerous consequences of pride. This in turn is preceded by the order not to be too proud to marry within one's people.

#### 1. The Translated Texts

G1

4:13 [Tobit tells Tobiah not to be too proud to marry a woman from among his kinsfolk]. ‘Because in pride there is ruin and much confusion and in idleness/worthlessness (ἀχρειότης) there is diminution/loss and great neediness, for idleness/worthlessness is the mother of hunger/famine (μήτηρ ἐστὶν τοῦ λιμοῦ).’<sup>371</sup>

319

4:13 [Tobit tells Tobiah not to be too proud to marry a woman from among his kinsfolk]. ‘Because in pride there is ruin and much confusion. Idleness (ἀχρειότης)<sup>372</sup> μη λυμενου.’<sup>373</sup>

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370. Cf. 4Q415 2ii 1-9, in which a woman appears to be addressed as part of wisdom document; esp. 1, reconstructed as ‘honour him like a father (כבוד כבד)’.

371. So Alexandrinus; Vaticanus: λειμοῦ, corrected by a later hand. Concerning translation, see below.

372. Spelling variation of ἀχρειότης (Hanhart, *Tobit*, 92). λυμενου may be analysed as an epic aorist genitive masculine or neuter singular participle of λύω, ‘to loose.’ Combined with participles, μη has a ‘conditional or general force’, so Smyth, 612 (2702). There is, however, no way of translating the phrase that makes any sense.

373. Reading from Hanhart, *Tobit*, 92. See Text-Critical Issues, below.

## Regius

4:13 [Tobit tells Tobiah not to be too proud to marry a woman from among his kinsfolk]. 'Because in pride there is ruin and much fickleness. and by extravagance, diminution and great impiety.

## Reginensis

4:13 [Tobit tells Tobiah not to be too proud to marry a woman from among his kinsfolk]. 'Because in pride there is ruin and much discord and *iugalitas* (the state of conjugal union)<sup>374</sup> is the mother of poverty.

## Monacensis

4:13 [Tobit tells Tobiah not to be too proud to marry a woman from among his kinsfolk]. 'Because in pride there is ruin and much fickleness and by deceitful dealing<sup>375</sup>, diminution, and trifling playfulness is the mother of famine (*fames*).

## 2. Text-Critical Issues

A casual glance at the versions above indicates some problems. We have noted already that despite the lacuna of Sinaiticus, verses such as 4:13 are attested in other witnesses. In this case, however, although the verses are indeed present, there is no agreement on the reading. Certainly, the reading of G1 that idleness is the mother of hunger/famine is the most coherent. Unfortunately, the reading found in G1 is not present in the OL manuscripts most useful for textual criticism. Neither Regius nor Reginensis say anything that has anything to

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374. At the time of submission, the presence of *iugalitas* continues to baffle the author, her supervisor, and classicist Luke Pitcher, although to be sure, too many children can lead to poverty. Perhaps the negative reference to conjugality (*iugulitas*) may reflect the views of a Christian monastic scribe.

375. Reading *in stellionatu* for *instellionatu*. I am grateful again to Luke Pitcher for his insight into the Latin.

do with food. The wording and content of Reginensis, including the use of the word ‘mother’, is the closer of the two. It is, instead, Monacensis’ reading that best fits the Greek, referring as it does explicitly to the ‘mother of famine.’ Problematically, however, as we have already indicated in the introduction to this study, we are working from an inferior edition and Monacensis may not be independent of G1.

Fortunately, however, for our purposes, the reading of 319 (μη λυμενου), supports G1. The similarity in letters strongly suggests the presence of a scribal error. In the great uncial codices, we already see a whole set of abbreviations (*nomina sacra*), marked as such by means of an over-bar. One such term that was abbreviated was the word for mother (μήτηρ), which was abbreviated as μηρ. We can in fact see this abbreviation in Tob. 4:13 in Alexandrinus. Apparently then, μηρ was misread as μη, an occurrence that could easily happen, given the appearance of many minuscules in which letters are not infrequently connected across word boundaries. From that point, without necessarily being able to reconstruct the process in full detail, one can see how other changes subsequently came about. Accordingly, there is good reason to think that the reading of ‘mother of hunger/famine’ may have circulated in an earlier Semitic form.

### 3. Issues in Translation

Next, we should clarify more precisely what constitutes the punishment for laziness in G1 and 319. The Greek and Latin are ambiguous; λιμός and *fames* can denote both ‘hunger’ and

‘famine’.<sup>376</sup> In Hebrew, רָעַב, which is consistently translated as λιμός by the LXX/Old Greek, possesses the same ambiguity.<sup>377</sup> As for Aramaic, although multiple words for ‘hunger’ and ‘famine’ are attested across its various dialects, there is a widely attested root: כִּפְּנָ. As was the case with רָעַב in Hebrew, כִּפְּנָ in Aramaic can refer to both ‘hunger’ and ‘famine’ and it translates Hebrew רָעַב in the Targumim.<sup>378</sup> Despite an ambiguity across four languages, it may be fair to say that Tob. 4:13 likely refers to hunger. Such a condition is a more probable consequence of an individual’s inactivity, whereas famine typically refers to a condition experienced by entire community or nation.

#### 4. Background

Although our verse most likely refers to hunger rather than famine, it is worth commenting briefly about famines in the ancient world. According to studies of the ancient Mediterranean, there were certainly ‘food crises’; however, though ‘shortages’ were ‘frequent’, famines as such were typically ‘infrequent.’<sup>379</sup> Nonetheless, when famines did occur as a result of war or weather, they were naturally a serious matter, as reflected in Israelite and Jewish writings.<sup>380</sup> That hunger can be a consequence of not working hard enough is attested in Hebrew wisdom

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376. *BDAG*, 596; *OLD*, 24.

377. *HALOT*, 1257; cf. Constantinople 1519’s version of Tob. 4:13.

378. In Palestinian and Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, in the Targumim and in Syriac (CAL); Wadi Natrun for Tob. 4:13 has ܕܚܝܒ.

379. Peter Garnsey, *Food and Society*, 35; see further Peter Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply in the Graeco-Roman World: Responses to Risk and Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 17-39.

380. E.g. Gen. 12:10; 26:1; 43:1; 2 Sam. 21:1; 1 Kgs. 18:2; 2 Kgs. 4:38; 6:25; 8:1, 25:3; Ruth 1:1; Neh. 5:3; Lam. 2:19; 4:9; Ps. 37:19; 1 Macc. 9:24; Jdt. 7:14.

literature.<sup>381</sup> It is also observable among other cultures past and present.<sup>382</sup> Hunger and famine are also featured more broadly in the Hebrew Bible as a punishment for not obeying YHWH.<sup>383</sup>

## 5. Function of Food in the Unit

We now turn to the function of food in the verse. Clearly, an absence of food serves as a logical consequence for the condemned behaviour of being lazy. Such views (see Leading Characteristics, below) are by no means limited to Israelites/Jews, nor is the idea that one or more divine entity is ultimately responsible for one's food. Nonetheless, when Tobit's teaching is put together within the strong agricultural link between proper and improper behaviour and its connection with YHWH just noted above, the seriousness of what the loss of food could mean to Jew in antiquity is better appreciated, even when not presented in a sacral context. With food-linked terminology acting as a negative incentive for proper behaviour, we see that, as was the case in chapter 1 and much of 2, concepts involving food and eating are used to communicate Tobit's sense of proper and improper behaviour. This particular teaching thus reinforces the narrative's overall emphasis upon pious and proper

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381. Cf. Prov. 19:15.

382. This recalls the well-known story of the ant and the cricket/grasshopper found in some collections of fables attributed to Aesop. See Syntipas 43 from Ben E. Perry, *Aesopica: a Series of Texts Relating to Aesop or Ascribed to him or Closely Connected with the Literary Tradition That Bears His Name*; (collected and critically edited, in part translated from Oriental languages, with a commentary and historical essay; Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1952)( <http://www.mythfolklore.net/aesopica/syntipas/43.htm> [accessed 27/10/2006]); Zimmermann, *The Book of Tobit*, 70, cites a similar Dutch proverb.

383. E.g. Deut. 28:48; 32:24; Isa. 5:13; 14:30; Jer. 11:22; 27:8; Ezek. 7:19; Mic. 6:14; Sir. 39:29 (MS B has רע, presumably the first two letters of רעב).

behaviour. The food-element is secondary to that aim.

## 6. Narrative Tensions and Possible Redaction

Although the idea about laziness and hunger is not uniquely Jewish (Leading Characteristics, below), the general context into which the statement is found, concerns endogamy, presented as an Israelite/Jewish practice. Note, therefore, that the statement about hunger does not fit well within the general context of a discussion of endogamy. We have already observed that in between the words about endogamy and our statement about hunger there is a verse about the consequences of pride. The statement about pride seems to follow from the idea of not being too proud to marry within one's people. The link between pride and idleness is roughly parallel in that both refer to the consequences of improper attitudes or actions. Nonetheless, read straight through, 4:13 seems rather jerky. The general impression one receives is of each sub-unit (endogamy and pride; pride and bad consequences; laziness and consequences) following somewhat logically from the unit before it, but no further. Depending on our understanding of Tobit's development, we can attribute this to a redactor thinking only 'locally' or to a composer without a concern for modern logic. As part of our assessment, it is worth noting under what circumstances (generally not lists, as observed earlier) in which the story seems perfectly capable of supplying a linear narrative. We will bring together all of this data together in the conclusion to this study.

## 7. Leading Characteristics

In this particular instance, hunger as a punishment is certainly not without significance, but

the primary issue at hand is laziness. The statement, like the other teachings in this passage is in the form of discourse, and occurs in a cautionary context. Although strictly speaking not concerned with righteousness per se, the statement displays a strong tie between food and the enforcement of proper behaviour. Also we have noted that although disapprobation of laziness is certainly found in Jewish wisdom writings, it is more widely attested, as noted in Background, above.

D. Binge Drinking and Drunkenness (4:15)

The next reference concerns drink and its consumption, rather than food. In G1, binge drinking (drinking with the intention of getting drunk) is clearly referred to with disapprobation in the first half of the teaching. The second half appears to express disapproval of drunkenness as a regular lifelong practice. The statement follows the famous rule about not doing to another that which is hateful to oneself.

1. The Translated Texts

G1

4:15 Do not drink wine to drunkenness (οἶνον εἰς μέθην μὴ πίης) and let not *drunkenness* (μέθη) go with you on your way.

319

4:15 Let not (something *wicked* (πονηρόν) go with you on your way.

Regius

4:15 Do not drink wine to drunkenness (*noli bibere uinum in ebrietate*) and let not *wickedness* (*nequitia*) go with you on your way.

Reginensis<sup>384</sup>

4:15 Keep away from drunkenness (*ab ebrietate abstine*).

## 2. Text-Critical Issues

As one can see, there is some significant variation among the versions. Two speak of drunkenness only, one speaks of something wiked or wickedness only, and one speaks of both. Although 319 says nothing about drunkenness, there is ample evidence from (the relatively independent) G1 and OL manuscripts that it was present in an earlier Semitic form of the Book of Tobit. At the same time, judging from the evidence of 319 and other OL manuscripts (Corbeiensis, Regius, Sangermanensis 15, Bobbiensis, Alcalà), we find it possible that the second half of the statement refers to wickedness rather than drunkenness, although this is not entirely certain. To be sure, the G1 formulation is more opaque. At the same time, the transition from the theme of drunkenness to that of wickedness in Regius is not entirely smooth, except, perhaps, either in the sense of two unworthy ways of living or of drunkenness as a cause of wickedness.<sup>385</sup> Accordingly, although the evidence of Regius is highly suggestive, this is another instance in which a reading from the DSS would be a desideratum.

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384. Monacensis also has an abbreviated statement about abstaining from inebriation; such a statement is absent in Sangermanensis 15, Bible de Rosas and Alcalà.

385. Otto Fridolin Fritzsche, *Die Bücher Tobia und Judith erklärt* (KEHAT Leipzig: Weidmann, 1851), followed and cited by Moore, *Tobit* 172, suggests that G1 effectively warns against a lifetime pattern of habitual drunkenness. This reading is no doubt ingenious, but its very existence betrays that it is far from transparent.



### 3. Function of Food in the Unit

As in the case with the warning against laziness, Tobit's cautionary words about drunkenness concern the avoidance of a negative behaviour. Consumption here is the foremost concern, but once again, as is frequently the case in Tobit, it serves as an illustration of proper behaviour. As with Tobit's recited behaviour's of chapter 1 and with the saying of Tob. 4:13, what one does with edible substances in this verse supports the chapter's overall aim of presenting its teachings of right living. Here, they are presented ostensibly for Tobiah's behalf, but could be taken as general pronouncements reflecting the ideologies of the narrative as a whole.

### 4. Sources

We have noted in the introduction to this study that the non-Jewish *Story and Wisdom of Ahikar* is an important source for the Book of Tobit as we find it. One of those features that we have especially drawn attention to is that Tobit, like *Ahikar*, is a combination of both a story and a series of sayings. Ever more significantly, there is some connection between individual sayings in the two works. Shortly we shall explore a famous case of this. For the moment, however, it suffices to say that, some versions of *Ahikar* comment on drunkenness. Naturally, this point of agreement need not indicate a dependency, because, as we shall soon see, the subject was a common trope. Moreover, the evidence among the *Ahikar* versions is not as strong as one might like.<sup>386</sup> Nonetheless, for completeness sake, it is worth making the

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386. The passage for the Syriac in Conybeare, et al., *Ahikar*, p.63 no.43 in fact may be referring to unguent rather than drinking as noted by the editors as well as by an anonymous reader from Durham University. The Armenian, however, (p. 34, no. 93,

observation.

## 5. Background<sup>387</sup>

Lastly, as noted above, warnings against drunkenness are a staple of 'wisdom literature', but are not limited to that genre. They are common among Egyptian documents, in which drunkenness was 'mildly' disapproved of.<sup>388</sup> They are featured in writings that circulated among Israelites and Jews,<sup>389</sup> ('Pagan') Greeks<sup>390</sup> and Christians.<sup>391</sup> It is interesting to note that unlike writings such as Ben Sira or even Proverbs, in this text the Book of Tobit does not supply any reason why drunkenness poses a problem, even though it does so in some of the other admonitory instructions.<sup>392</sup>

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95-98) speaks against drunkenness and improper places to drink. It may be difficult, however, to argue for this being in an older form of the legend.

387. For general background, especially including the material evidence, see Michal Dayagi-Mendels, *Drink and Be Merry: Wine and Beer in Ancient Times* (Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 1999).

388. Phyllis Pray Bober, *Art, Culture, and Cuisine: Ancient and Medieval Gastronomy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999) 64t; Instruction of Ani p.137; Lieke, *AEL III: The Instruction of Ankhsheshonqy 11,6 and Instruction of Papyrus Insinger*, eighth instruction, 6, 13: 'he who drinks too much wine lies down in a stupor', p.190.

389. E.g. Hos. 4:11; Prov. 20:1; 23:20-21, 29-35; 1 Esd. 3:18; Sir. 19:2 (Hebrew MS C); 31:29-30 (Hebrew MS B); 26:8 (No Hebrew; on drunk wives; women's consumption among the Greeks was limited to religious festivals (Dayagi-Mendels, *Drink and Be Merry*, 76); being drunk gets a number of characters into trouble such as Noah (Gen. 9:21), Lot (Gen. 19:32-35), and Holofernes (Jdt. 12:20). See further Jack A. Sasson, "The Blood of Grapes," in *Drinking in Ancient Societies*, 399-419. See also the Jewish/Christian *T. Reub.* 3:13; *T. Jud.* 14:1-8; Philo, *Plant.*, esp. 142-305.

390. Theognis, *Elegy I* 211-212; Plutarch *De Garrulitate* 4= *Moralia III* 38.

391. They are a fixture among vice lists found in canonical Christian epistles: Rom. 13:13; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 4:25-32; Col. 3:5-10.

392. E.g. almsgiving (4:11) and endogamy (4:12-13).

Not all cultures in antiquity were equally troubled by drunkenness. At the very least, a kind of sacred drunkenness was expected on certain special occasions at least observable in the behaviour of the divine figures of ancient Mesopotamia<sup>393</sup> and Ugarit.<sup>394</sup> Even within the Ugaritic wisdom tradition (expressed within the context of epics), drunkenness would appear to be regarded as an expected event; a son's duties include helping his drunken father stand.<sup>395</sup>

In any case, as commentators frequently and rightfully note, disapproval of drunkenness in Israelite/Jewish writings, does not, imply disapproval of alcohol consumption in and of itself even in 'wisdom' literature.<sup>396</sup> The Deuteronomic tithe in fact includes the consumption of wine.<sup>397</sup> Wine is considered a source of happiness, a necessity and part of the bounty of YHWH.<sup>398</sup> It seems assumed in Tobit as well that drinking alcohol is not inherently a problem.

It is well known that wine was mixed with water in many countries along the Mediterranean

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393. Piotr Michalowski, "The Drinking Gods: Alcohol in Mesopotamian Ritual and Mythology," in *Drinking in Ancient Societies: History and Culture of Drinks in the Ancient Near East: Papers of a Symposium Held in Rome, May 17-19, 1990*. (L. Milano. Padova: Sargon, 1994); Bober, *Art, Culture, and Cuisine*, 64 states that Mesopotamian literature as a whole is not particularly bothered by drunkenness.

394. KTU 1.114 20-31 describes the elderly deity El's becoming drunk, followed by a prescription for treating hangover. From Greece we may compare the cult of Dionysus (or Bacchus).

395. KTU 1.17 ii 19-20.

396. Cf. Jack A. Sasson, "The Blood of Grapes," 404-405.

397. Deut. 14:23.

398. E.g. Amos 9:13; Ps. 104:15; Prov. 31:6; Qoh. 9:7; Sir. 31:27-28 (Hebrew Manuscripts B and F); 32:6 (Hebrew Manuscripts B and F); 39:26 (Hebrew MS B ).

littoral.<sup>399</sup> There are explicit references to the mixing of wine in the Hebrew Bible<sup>400</sup> as well as references to יין מִשְׁכָּר, traditionally translated as 'mixed wine.'<sup>401</sup> Philo refers to the practice and there are also references in the Mishnah.<sup>402</sup> This suggests that the Book of Tobit would take for granted the common practices of its environment including dilution of wine. Depending on the amount of water added, it could take a considerable amount of wine to become inebriated. We must assume nonetheless that this was considered enough of a possibility that a warning was required.

## 6. Leading Characteristics

Although the beverage wine and the activity of drinking are part of two versions of the unit, the emphasis of the saying is in fact drunkenness, a state resulting from excessive consumption rather than consumption in and of itself. As with the other sayings in Tobit's instruction, it occurs as part of a wider discourse about how to behave. Although a feature of Israelite/Jewish wisdom literature, we have shown clearly that it is by no means limited to them. From a socio-economic standpoint, this saying arguably evokes a context of an upper class person attending banquets (cf. Ben Sira 31:12-32:12, in which his comments about wine-drinking and drunkenness are contained).

## E. Food to the Hungry (4:16)

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399. Dalby, *Siren Feasts*, 103.

400. Isa. 5:22; Ps. 75:9; Prov. 9:2, 5.

401. Isa. 1:22 and 65:11; Prov. 23:30.

402. Philo, *Ebr.*, 4-5; e.g. *m.Demai* 7:2; *m.Ma'as.* 4:4; *m. Pesah.* 10:2.

We now turn to a subject already mentioned by Tobit in 1:17: giving food to the hungry. In contrast to 1:17, however, the gift of food for the hungry (and clothing for the naked) is not presented in the context of almsgiving, but as a self-standing command. If anything, as we shall soon see, it may connect with the verse to come, which pertains to a topic that is new to the Book of Tobit.

1. The Translated Texts

319

4:16 From your bread, give to the hungry (ἐκ τοῦ ἄρτου σου δίδου πινῶντι).<sup>403</sup>

Regius

4:16 From your bread, share with the hungry (*de pane tuo comunica esurientibus*).

G1

4:16 From your bread, give to the hungry (ἐκ τοῦ ἄρτου σου δίδου πεινῶντι).

2. Text-Critical Issues

There is only a minor text-critical matter to discuss. As one can see above, whilst 319 and G1 speak of *giving* food to the hungry, most OL manuscripts speak of *sharing* it.<sup>404</sup> The exception is Reginensis which has the verb ‘to give *do*’, as it also did in 1:17, where some OL manuscripts, notably Regius and Corbeiensis employ *divido*. The fact that here a different verb, *communico* is used, is intriguing. Ultimately, however, there is insufficient evidence to

403. Spelling variation, Hanhart, *Tobit*, 94.  
404. Corbeiensis, Regius, Bobbiensis, Monacensis, Bible de Rosas, Alcalà, Sangermanensis 15, and LCit Speculum §XXIV 409.12-14 use *communico* (to share).

suggest that the Greek *Vorlage* was any different than 319 and G1 and that its Semitic *Vorlage* read anything other than יהב or נתן.

### 3. Function of Food in the Unit

As with drunkenness, what one does with food or drink serves as an important example of an appropriate activity. This is especially the case given the fact, as discussed with regard to 1:17, that feeding the poor (with clothing the naked) is a particularly stereotypical form of charity and thus is a prominent example of righteous behaviour.<sup>405</sup>

### F. Consumable Substance(s) on the Graves of the Righteous (4:17)

The last reference to food and/or drink in Tobit's testament has been the most controversial. It is a teaching about putting consumable substance(s) upon the graves of the righteous dead. Because it immediately follows Tobit's advice to give food to the hungry, it may arguably seem that the narrative is moving from the idea of giving food to the living to the idea of giving food to the dead. Compare Ben Sira 7:33 (MS A): 'Give a gift to all who live; and even from the dead do not withhold mercy (תן מתן לפני כל חי / וגם ממת אל תמנע חסד).'

### 1. The Translated Texts

319  
Pour out (ἐκχεον) your bread (ἄρτον) and your wine (οἶνον) upon the grave of the righteous and do not give it to sinners.

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405. For all other information on Sources, Background, and Leading Characteristics see the discussion of 1:17 in Chapter Two of this study.

## Regius

Pour (*funde*) your wine (*uinum*) and your bread (*panem*) upon the graves of the just and do not give it to sinners.

## Reginensis

Son, divide/distribute (*distribue*) your bread (*panem*) and wine (*uinum*) with the just and not the sinners.

## G1

Pour out (ἐκχεον) your [loaves of] bread (ἄρτους) upon the grave of the righteous and do not give [it, any] to sinners.

## 2. Text-Critical Issues

The first difficulty with this verse is the text itself. As all the commentators point out, bread is not a liquid. To speak of pouring may seem peculiar.<sup>406</sup> Some scholars have adopted the suggestion that ἐκχεον, here translated as ‘pour’, has a more general meaning and can be translated, for instance, as ‘put.’<sup>407</sup> Support for this position is mixed. Whilst Greek Ben Sira 30:18 clearly uses ἐκχέω to translate Hebrew (MS B) ‘pour (׀ַשׁ)’, ἐκχέω may be paralleled in the second half of the verse (Greek only) with ‘to set beside (παράκειμαι)’.<sup>408</sup> For what it’s worth, Jewish inscriptional evidence from the second century B.C.E. (within range of the date of Tobit’s putative composition), attests to the more common definition of ‘pour.’<sup>409</sup> As we shall see in just a moment, however, contemporary understandings of the verb may be less helpful than we might think.

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406. E.g. Schumpp, *Buch Tobias*, 95-96; Moore, *Tobit*, 173.

407. Moore, *Tobit*, 173. This is a possible meaning, although pouring is much more frequent (LSJ, 526).

408. Cf. Sir. 7:33.

409. SIG<sup>3</sup> 1181.5, which interestingly also refers to angels and medicine.

There have been other approaches offered to resolve the problem. Zimmermann ingeniously proposes that an original Aramaic text containing the word 'your wine' (לחמך with a direct object marker prefix ל) was misread by a Hebrew translator as לחם 'your bread'.<sup>410</sup> From another angle, Greenfield has intriguingly found an instance of 'pouring' bread in the Old Aramaic Sefire III inscription (*KAI* 224, 1.7) and posits that this was the original rendering in *Ahiqar*, which as we shall soon discuss (Sources), is the likely origin of the teaching.<sup>411</sup> Much as this argument is compelling, especially coming from a scholar of Greenfield's calibre, wine may fit the context better because liquid libations are particularly well attested.<sup>412</sup> Moreover, 319 and all OL manuscripts refer to both wine and bread, indicating, at the very least, that the reading of 'wine' goes back to a Greek form of Tobit.<sup>413</sup> Nonetheless, what earlier Semitic forms of Tobit may have said remains uncertain. Before we can immediately assume that the references to wine are necessarily the most ancient, it is worth noting that

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410. Zimmermann, *The Book of Tobit*, 70. As a *lamedh* is not always obligatory as an object marker (Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte* 2:423-424 cites examples from Imperial Aramaic), one could equally posit an Aramaic-Aramaic transmission (and thus not require Aramaic priority).

411. Jonas C. Greenfield, "Two Proverbs of Ahiqar," in *Lingering over Words: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Literature in Honor of William L. Moran*. (T. Abusch, and et al. HSS 37; Atlanta: Scholars, 1990), 201; see conveniently, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1967), 6 line 7 לחם לחם; Fitzmyer, *Sefire*, 108, agrees that the verb means to 'pour' but is here used generally, 'to provide food,' and cites Franz Rosenthal (*BASOR* 158 (1960) 29, n.3) on the similar use of the Akkadian *nasāku*.

412. See Background, below.

413. Pace, Greenfield, "Two Proverbs of Ahiqar," 199, who sees the wine solely as a Latin development. See Corbeiensis, Regius, Bobbiensis, Monacensis, Bible de Rosas, Alcalà, Sangermanensis 15, and Reginensis. The best employ the verb *fundo*, whose first meaning is 'pour,' for both substances; *fundo* can also mean 'scatter', (Lewis and Short, 792-93; *OLD*, 746.)



there is variation as to whether wine (Regius) or bread (319 and (Reginensis) is mentioned first. This could possibly indicate independent developments. Lastly, we need to add into the equation the observation that whilst Regius agrees with the Greek on pouring, Reginensis has 'distribute' instead, demonstrating even more clearly that at some stages, translators were very willing to make changes. Although on the strength of Greenfield's argument the pouring of bread may very well go back to an earlier Semitic form of Tobit, here is yet another example for which DSS evidence would be highly desirable.

### 3. Sources

Before continuing further to some of the other problems with this verse, it is important to explain its connection with *Ahiqar*, as briefly noted above. Several versions of *Ahiqar* not only refer to the practice of pouring wine on the grave, they also make a distinction between the righteous and the wicked. The verse, 'My son, pour out thy wine on the graves of the righteous, rather than drink with evil men,' is found in 2:1 of the Syriac version and 4:17 of the Arabic version; there is also a parallel in 2:7 of the Armenian version, albeit without mention of the graves of the righteous.<sup>414</sup> This differs from Tobit in that in these versions the graveside offerings of the righteous are not contrasted with those of dead sinners, but with drinking with live sinners. Oddly, the idea that it is better to pour wine away at a grave than share it with the wrong company may presuppose less of an interest in grave offerings than in

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414. James M. Lindenberger, "Ahiqar: A New Translation and Introduction," in *OTP*, (ed. James Charlesworth; Garden City: Doubleday, 1985), 2: 490; Conybeare et al., *Story of Ahikar*: Syriac number 10 (ܐܗܝܩܪ (=41) no. 10 Syriac, p.61 translation); Arabic no. 13, p.90; Armenian no. 7, p.26.

the current formulation in Tob. 4:17. This is especially ironic given the controversy over the interpretation of the passage (see below).

#### 4. Background

The next difficulty with the verse is determining what kind of activity Tob. 4:17 is in fact describing and whether it could be considered an acceptable Jewish practice. These two questions are interrelated. We begin the discussion with some background information about graveside offerings involving consumable substances in ancient and modern cultures as a whole. The notion that the dead have a continued existence and accordingly require food and especially drink is attested widely both in antiquity and in the present. A famous example of this is found in the eighth century Old Aramaic Panammu inscription.<sup>415</sup> Evidence of graveside offerings (often in the form of libations) also exists for Mesopotamia,<sup>416</sup> in Ugarit,<sup>417</sup> among the Hittites,<sup>418</sup> in ancient Greece,<sup>419</sup> and perhaps most famously, in Egypt.<sup>420</sup> Such offerings are found more recently not only among the Bedouin,<sup>421</sup> but also within such

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415. *KAI* 214; for text see conveniently John C. L. Gibson, *TSSI* 2: 78-81, esp. 80 line 18 (eat and drink are reconstructions); for discussion, Jonas C. Greenfield, "Un rite religieux araméen et ses parallèles," *RB* 80 (1973), 46-52.

416. Miranda Bayliss, "The Cult of Dead Kin in Assyria and Babylonia," *Iraq* 35 (1973), 116-117, 119-120.

417. Claude F. A. Schaeffer, "Les Fouilles des Ras Shamra," *Syria* 15 (1934), 114-118 and *Syria* 19 (1938), 213, cited in Rabenau, *Buch Tobit*, 62.

418. Klaas Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (Alter Orient und Altes Testament 219; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Butzon & Bercker Kevelaer, 1986), 130-131.

419. Chrysanthi Gallou, *The Mycenaean Cult of the Dead* (BAR International Series 1371; Oxford: Archaeopress, 2005), 83-104, *passim*.

420. Jan Assmann, *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt* (trans. David Lorton; abridged and updated by the author; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 330-48.

421. Julian Morgenstern, *Rites of Birth, Marriage, Death and Kindred Occasions Among the Semites* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1966), 120, 124-130, and 132.

diverse regions as China<sup>422</sup> and Mexico.<sup>423</sup>

Graveside offerings may also have occurred at some point among Israelites and Jews. The idea that the dead need to eat may even be present in Psalm 22:30 (English Ps. 22:29), if one reads 'they ate (אכלו)' and not the emendation of 'surely (אִלָּן אִלָּן)'.<sup>424</sup> Moreover, literary references to offerings as an ordinary practise are found in pre-Rabbinic documents that are of approximately the same period as Tobit. The Epistle of Jeremiah 26 (= Bar. 6:26<sup>425</sup>) compares gifts given to idols with those put before the dead (ὥσπερ νεκροῖς τὰ δῶρα αὐτοῖς παρατίθεται), using a verb (παρατίθημι), that we have already noted (Chapter Three of this study) can refer to presenting food.<sup>426</sup> We have also already referred to Ben Sira 30:18 (Greek), which states that 'Good things poured out upon a mouth that is closed are like offerings of food placed upon a grave (NRSV; ἀγαθὰ ἐκκεχυμένα ἐπὶ στόματι κεκλεισμένῳ θέματα βρωμάτων παρακείμενα ἐπὶ τάφῳ). Ben Sira may speak negatively of the practice here but seems to take it for granted. Furthermore, as Nathan MacDonald pointed out, the Hebrew of Sir. 30:18 speaks of idols, rather than the dead, which could

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422. Emily M. Ahern, *The Cult of the Dead in a Chinese Village* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1973), 166-170.

423. Hugo G. Nutini, *Todos Santos in Rural Tlaxcala: Syncretic, Expressive, and Symbolic Analysis of the Cult of the Dead* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 170-174, describes a wide range of edible items.

424. Mark S. Smith, and Elizabeth M. Bloch-Smith, "Death and Afterlife in Ugarit and Israel," *JAOS* 108 (1988), 283. The various other verses stated as examples of Israelites feeding the dead in Elizabeth M. Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices and Beliefs about the Dead* (JSOTSup 123; JSOT/ASOR Monograph 7; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 122 and-126 are highly suggestive but do not offer definitive proof.

425. This corresponds to Bar. 6:27 in the English.

426. To be sure, one might maintain that such practices could be referring to non-Jews. On this subject, however, see discussion on Baruch in the next section (What is Being Described in Tob. 4:17?)

conceivably suggest that food offerings were acceptable earlier.<sup>427</sup> This idea may be reinforced by the other verse from Ben Sira that we have also already mentioned (Sir. 7:33, Hebrew (MS A)).<sup>428</sup>

Moreover, awareness that such practices existed persist in the Targumim and Rabbinic literature. Often this is reflected in translations and other modes of interpretation that do not present a literal understanding of a text. Examples of this are found in Targumic translations of Deuteronomy 26:14 (see below).<sup>429</sup> The same interpretation is found in *m. Ma'aser Shen* 5:12. Archaeological evidence for such practises among Israelites and Jews, however, is suggestive but not definitive. Take, for example, the presence of cooking vessels found in Jewish tombs.<sup>430</sup> Are they evidence of the dead as eaters or is it a matter of supplying the dead with goods that they used in their lifetimes? Ultimately, although the literary evidence suggests such practices took place, offerings of food to the dead cannot be demonstrated on the basis of archaeological evidence alone.

## 5. What is Being Described in Tob. 4:17?

If all we had to consider were the words of 4:17, it would be difficult to see them describing anything other than a graveside offering analogous to those described above. This is further

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427. MacDonald, "Food on the Graves," 102.

428. MacDonald, "Food on the Graves," 102; see also Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 177.

429. *TgN*, *TgPs-J*, and the Fragmentary Targum treat the verse as referring to shrouds for the dead (and in the case of Neofiti, also the coffin) when the underlying Hebrew text is clearly referring to food.

430. L. Y. Rahmani, "Jewish Rock-Cut Tombs in Jerusalem," *Atiqot* 3 (1961), 119,

supported by strong likelihood that the saying derives from some version of *Ahiqar* (see Sources, above), where there is no indication that any alternative practice is intended. Many scholars maintain, nonetheless, that the verse depicts a different custom involving the provision of food to mourners to comfort them (Jer. 16:7; 2 Sam. 3:35; Ezek. 24:17).<sup>431</sup> If this were the case, however, the issue of whether the deceased were righteous or not need not make any difference; surviving kin of wicked relatives also require comfort.<sup>432</sup> Even if Tobit were in fact depict such an activity this interpretation still does not solve the problem of Israelites performing rituals linked with the dead that seem to be too 'pagan.' The consumption of food and drink at the graveside, ostensibly to comfort mourners, can nonetheless still be seen within the broader context of the widely attested practice of graveside sacrifices, which was often frowned upon in Israelite and Jewish writings (e.g. Ps. 106:28).<sup>433</sup>

There is a third problem with the view that the practice described refers to food eaten by

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431. E.g. Schumpp, *Buch Tobias*, 95-99; Bückers, *Tobias*, 210; Girbau, *Tobit*, 53; Priero, *Tobia*, 90; Clamer, *Tobie*, 434; Stummer, *Buch Tobit*, 16; Pfeiffer, *New Testament Times*, 266; Gross, *Tobit* 27; in contrast, Émile Osty, *Esdras-Néhémie-Tobit-Judith-Esther* (La Bible 10; Paris: Recontre, 1970), 185, maintains that Tobit can safely refer to the practice without any danger of 'pagan' connotations; Jonas C. Greenfield, "Two Proverbs of Ahiqar," Moore, *Tobit*, 173 and Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 176-177, recognise the complexities at hand.

432. Fitzmyer, *Buch Tobit*, 177, also picks up on the fundamental difference between righteous and sinners, which is even more pronounced in later versions of *Ahiqar*.

433. Cf. Spronk 248-9 on reading Jer. 16:7 as a *Marzeah* (For more on this institution, see John L. McLaughlin, *The Marzeah in the Prophetic Literature: References and Allusions in Light of the Extra-Biblical Evidence* (VTSup 86; Leiden: Brill, 2001.) We should also keep in mind the words of Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (London: S.C.M.P., 1981), 24 "Burial customs are among the most notoriously stable aspects of most cultures . . . they cannot be neatly categorized as "pagan" or "Christian" or "popular" or "superstitious."

mourners. It concerns the Epistle of Jeremiah (Baruch 6). We have already noted that Baruch 6:26 speaks of gifts set before the dead, gifts that may possibly be food. At the same time, Baruch 6:31 (English 6:32) speaks of a funerary banquet (περίδειπνον). This demonstrates two important points. First, if scholars insist on using this verse as an illustration of Jewish practice, then by the same token, they should also include 6:26.<sup>434</sup> Second, Baruch 6 shows plainly that both of these different practices were known. Therefore, it does not follow logically to claim that because one practice exists, it means that a second one cannot exist as well. Indeed, a funerary banquet could even include both eating on the part of mourners and, at the same time, offerings to the dead.

Much of the reason for seeking alternative practices among the prophetic material, in any case, derives not from its overwhelming similarity to the Book of Tobit, but out of a conviction that Deuteronomy 26:14 would forbid such an activity.<sup>435</sup> Whatever the precise meaning of Deuteronomy 26:14, it is not phrased as a prohibition of offerings as such. Rather the verse refers only of the use of *a special food portion* for a particular purpose, which is but one of many purposes for which *that particular food* may not be employed.<sup>436</sup> Accordingly, we cannot conclude on the basis of Deuteronomy that the practice is forbidden.

Some scholars actually do accept the view that 4:17 depicts a graveside offering, but they

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434. E.g. Schumpp, 97.

435. Ps. 106:28 and *Jub.* 22:17 are often invoked but as these involve the explicit consumption of graveside sacrifices they are not relevant to the Tobit passage for which such consumption is not mentioned.

436. Cf. Rabenau, *Buch Tobit*, 61; MacDonald, "Bread on the Grave," 101.

also consider it as something non-Jewish and extraneous that has got into the text.<sup>437</sup> Like the unclean dog (from a Jewish perspective) in Tobit, the teaching is a holdover from older material, in this case *Ahiqar*. Even if one were to assume that graveside offerings were not practised by Jews during the period(s) of Tobit's composition, this assessment is problematic.<sup>438</sup> It begs the question of why, of all the multitude of proverbs found in *Ahiqar*, this particular one was included. As we shall see shortly below (Function) the teaching reinforces concepts important to Tobit as a whole.

## 6. Function of Food in the Unit

The role of food and drink in this unit clearly provides yet another instance in which what one does with something edible is in focus and is judged a proper behaviour. Yet its significance for the story as a whole is much more profound. As Jonas Greenfield has rightly observed, the emphasis of the saying (especially in the form it appears in *Ahiqar*; see Sources, above) lies not in a simple endorsement of graveside offerings but in contrast with an activity involved with the wicked.<sup>439</sup> The idea is that it is better not to drink wine at all but pour it on the grave of someone righteous than to drink it with the wrong person. Although Tobit differs in its formulation, the contrast between the righteous and the wicked is likewise at its core.

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437. E.g. Alonso-Schökel, *Tobias*, 62; Dancy, *Shorter Books*, 32

438. Note that Jewish Medieval versions such as Constantinople 1516, Constantinople 1519, and the Bodleian Aramaic have no qualms about referring to graveside offerings. For instance, Constantinople 1516 reads לחמך וייןך שפוך על קברי צדיקים

439. Greenfield, "Two Proverbs of *Ahiqar*," 201.

By endorsing offerings upon the graves of the righteous but not sinners, the text powerfully combines and promotes two key themes of the book as a whole: the notion that the righteous should be rewarded and the wicked punished, as already noted, and the notion that the dead should be attended to.<sup>440</sup> The fate of the righteous and the path to righteousness occupy a fair amount of chapters 1, 2, and 4. Likewise, respect for the dead, which is usually spoken of with regard to burial, is clearly a major theme as well, appearing in chapters 1, 2, and 4.<sup>441</sup> In addition, the theme of providing for the needy (esp. almsgiving) may also be reflected here.<sup>442</sup>

## 7. Leading Characteristics

Here we have a reference to the gift of food and/or drink combined with the idea that the dead consume. Although edible substances are central to the teaching, it is the distinction between the righteous and the sinners that is truly in the forefront. The deed, like the rest of the deeds mentioned in the chapter, is part of a discourse. As indicated above, the saying is concerned with righteous behaviour at more than one level. Although Jews may have indeed practised graveside offerings, it is a practice well attested within the wider world.

## G. Preparations for the Journey (5:17)

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440. Sir. 12:1-7 (represented in the Hebrew, MS A, though not identical) makes a similar distinction when speaking of not feeding the impious (12:5). There is no evidence in the text for the proposal of Priero, *Tobia*, 41, that the sinners refer to other nations.

441. Death as a whole persists as a major theme in Tobit. The execution of the compatriot in 2, the deaths of Sarah's seven husbands in 3, and the prayers for death by Tobit and Sarah, in chapter 3 also, have already taken place thus far.

442. MacDonald, "Bread on the Grave," 102. As noted above, the instruction follows 4:16, which refers to feeding the hungry which may follow thinking similar to that of Sir. 7:33 (Hebrew MS A).



The final reference to food in our unit can only be inferred. When Tobit tells Tobiah to prepare the ‘things for the journey’, he most likely means that his son should include solid and liquid nourishment.

1. The Translated Text

.... And he called his son and said to him, ‘Lad, get ready (ἐτοίμασον) the things for the journey (τά πρὸς τὴν ὁδόν) and go out (καὶ ἔξελθε) with your brother. . . . and he went to go out (καὶ ἐξῆλθεν) on his journey and he kissed his father and his mother and Tobit said to him, ‘Go in health.’

2. Text-Critical Issues

319 and some OL manuscripts and differ slightly from Sinaiticus. Most relevantly, 319 lacks the phrase, ‘the things for the journey’ that is found before ‘go out with your brother,’ in Sinaiticus. Thus, 319 refers only to preparation. This is similarly the case in Corbeiensis, Regius, Monacensis, Alacalà, and Sangermanensis 15; Bobbiensis (*ad uiam*) and Reginensis (*quae in itinere*), however, do employ similar phrases.<sup>443</sup> Most likely, at some stage in the transmission of the text as found in Sinaiticus, a scribe’s eye jumped from ‘and he went out (καὶ ἔξελθε)’ to ‘and they went out (καὶ ἐξῆλθεν).’ Thus there is little reason to think that an explicit reference to supplies for the journey was not in earlier Semitic forms of the Book of Tobit.

3. Background

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443. Bible de Rosas has *properare* (hurry) rather than the expected *prepara* (prepare).

Food provisions (לַחֵם/לֶחֶם) and their derived verb (לָחַם) are referred to a number of times in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>444</sup> A famous episode in Joshua involves the deception practised by the people of Gibeon, who make use of dry, crumbly bread and burst wineskins to pretend to the Israelites that they come from far away.<sup>445</sup> A more extensive account of the packing of food for a journey is found in Judith, although her rations are meant to cover time spent amongst Holofernes as well as time travelling. In addition to the basic staples of bread and wine, she takes olive oil, parched grain, and cakes of dried fruit.<sup>446</sup> Although the Book of Judith is fiction, the types of food she takes, properly sealed, would keep well. Provisions for a similar undertaking in classical antiquity included barley meal, a form of emmer meal, various kinds of biscuits, and spiced wine in concentrated form.<sup>447</sup>

#### 4. Function of Food in the Unit and Leading Characteristics

The reference to preparations for the journey is neither necessary for the plot, nor does it contribute to structure, to instilling drama, to highlighting pious behaviour or even to depict character. It is, instead, one of those small details, casually presented, that adds a sense of realism to the story. Like the small details in a painting, the extras in a movie, or a single instrument in a symphony, background elements are important for creating a fuller and richer work of art. Perhaps the more fantastical a story is, the more important that it be grounded within an understandable reality. One can see this strikingly in the extent to which

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444. Gen. 42:25; 45:21; Ex. 12:39; Josh. 1:11; Judg. 7:8, 20:10; 1Sam. 22:10.

445. Josh. 9:1-27, esp. 9:4-5 and 9:12-13.

446. Jdt. 10:5.

447. Dalby, *A to Z*, 330-331; wine in amphora jars and barley meal, 'the marrow of men', are taken by Telemachus (*Odyssey* 2.290); Diocles of Carystus (Oribasius, *Synopsis ad Eustathium* 5.31(CMG VI 3; Vol 5. p.166, 5-31 Raeder) lines 15-16 recommends a mixture of fine barley groats with water and salt.

contemporary English culture pervades Tolkien's Middle Earth, complete with fish and chips (this type of fish itself of Jewish origin) and tobacco smoked in pipes (which did not even reach England until introduced by Sir Francis Drake, along with the potato). The little detail in Tobit about food rations obviously has no connection with either righteous behaviour or any particular Jewish practice.

## H. Conclusion

In Tobit's testament in chapter 4, reference to food and drink are all secondary parts of a discourse with which Tobiah is instructed concerning pious and proper behaviour. In different ways, what one does with food is illustrative of both how Tobit wishes his son to behave. The same might also be said of what practices the Book of Tobit wishes to endorse. In the first instance, not having enough food is presented as a logical punishment for someone who does not work hard enough. Second, there is a warning about the ill effects of excessive consumption with respect to alcohol. Third, there is a reference to food distribution, in terms of feeding hungry. Fourth, and lastly, there is a second reference to food distribution, involving some kind of edible substance that should be placed upon the graves of the righteous but not upon those of sinners. We note in particular that feeding the hungry has already been part of Tobit's list of good deeds in chapter 1 (Tob. 1:17) and a stereotypical example of righteous behaviour. We also stress that the presentation of consumable substance upon graves, whatever degree which it may reflect Jewish practice, powerfully combines respect to the dead and the idea of the righteous being rewarded, two themes of great importance both to Tobit the character and Tobit the story. Altogether, it is worth noting, that although each of these teachings refer how best to behave, none of these deeds necessarily

are restricted to Israelites or Jews. We have also seen how even a minor detail in chapter 5 regarding what appear to be travel rations, is important for the overall texture of the story.

On the text-critical front, we have made it clear that the verses absent in Sinaiticus (4:6b to 4:19) are due to scribal error, given the evidence from 319 as well as OL manuscripts. We have shown that despite numerous difficulties in the OL, 319 ultimately supports the reading of G1 for 4:13, describing how hunger is a result of laziness. We have also explored the *crux* that is 4:17 and have particularly highlighted Greenfield's observation that 'pouring' bread has an ancient precedent. At the same time, we have drawn attention to the fact that a reading that includes 'wine' is attested in 319 and that we might expect liquid libations.

In terms of redaction, we have observed that because the teachings in chapter 4 appear as a list, a natural environment is created for the introduction of further material. We have pointed out the remarks about laziness is in tension with the broader context within which it is located. We have also suggested that future studies may wish to analyse the differences among the presumed socio-economic status presupposed by the various teachings as a way forward regarding the question of redaction. As to sources, later version of *Ahiqar*, especially the Syriac and the Arabic, strongly indicate that this story served as a source for Tob. 4:17 on the placing of food and/or drink upon the graves of the righteous. We have noticed, nonetheless, that, interestingly, Tobit's version of the saying emphasises grave offerings more so than does *Ahiqar*! Regarding class and gender, we have noted that women and slaves could (and do) performs many of the commandments enjoined by Tobit in his testament. All the same, however, the teachings are, as in the case with so much wisdom literature,

addressed to a young man. The short instruction that Sarah receives from her father in chapter 10 of the story is by no means comparable.

Regarding the thorny question of authorial intentionality, we call attention to what we have already noted above, that the narrative seems designed to encourage particular behaviour. But given the likelihood that the unit underwent a fair amount of development over time, we can surely not think of a single author's intentions. Rather, it is better to think of the passage as a unit, and a messy one at that, like an overgrown forest with plants in various stages of growth. Moss and lichen may be growing on some of the trees, connected in some way with what has come before, but not entirely of the same substance. Taken in all of its untidy totality, it presents far more as a whole testament than divided into individual units.

## Chapter Five: The Fish (Tob. 6 and its Echoes in 8 and 11)

### A. Introduction

The next chapter of Tobit begins with the journey proper. Raphael and Tobiah reach the river Tigris the very first night. What takes place there and its repercussions later in the story are replete with important connections to food and its consumption. Tobiah is attacked by a fish who mistakes his foot for an easy meal. Tobiah, in turn, overpowers his enemy, harvests its medicinal organs, cooks it, eats it, and salts the leftovers. With the fish's heart and liver he will cure Sarah of her demon and with the gall he will restore sight to his father. Because these organs arise out of a meal and some are even edible, they fall within the purview of this study. As the cures themselves take place in chapters 8 and 11 within the framework already set forth in 6, all passages concerning the fish organs will be examined together here.<sup>448</sup> At the same time, to best appreciate the forthcoming analysis, it is important to stress how chapter 6 is pivotal for the story of Tobit. It is here -- at just about at the exact centre of the book -- that it becomes clear how Tobit's blindness and Sarah's demon, the major problem in of the story, will be resolved. This was promised as early as 3:17:

And Raphael was sent to cure the two: Tobit, by removing the white spots from his eyes . . . and Sarah . . . by freeing her from the wicked demon Asmodeus.

Until this chapter, however, is it nowhere specified how these two great acts of healing will be achieved. In particular, there is no inkling that the instrument of the cures will be the

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448. A brief mention of plans for a wedding party in 6:13 is discussed with other meals linked with weddings in Tob. 7-9 in Chapter Six of this study.

organs of a large fish. Significantly, the account of how these organs are obtained and the description of their usage as healing agents are intertwined with the fish's wish to eat of Tobiah and, its counterpart, Tobiah's eating of the fish.

## B. Tobit and the Hungry Fish (6:1-6)

We turn first to an exciting scene involving food and eating on a dramatic scale. Washing his feet by the Tigris River, Tobiah is attacked by a hungry fish. Luckily, he has Raphael with him and what starts as a near loss of a body part results in good fortune in the form of the fish's medicinal organs. As we shall show, however, Tobit's encounter with the large sea creature is significant in other ways, as well.

### 1. The Translated Text

6:2 And the lad went out and the angel with him and the dog went out with him , , , and the first night came upon them and they camped by the Tigris river. 6:3 And the lad went down into the Tigris to wash off his feet and a great fish, leaping up<sup>449</sup> from the water, wished to gulp down (καταπιεῖν) the foot of the lad and he cried out. 6:4 And the angel said to the lad, 'seize and hold fast<sup>450</sup> to the fish and the lad seized the fish and carried it up upon the land. 6:5 [The angel instructs Tobiah to rip open fish to obtain its medicinal organs.] 6:6 [Tobiah rips opens the fish and gathers organs]<sup>451</sup> and roasted (ῥόπτῃσεν) some of the fish and ate [it]<sup>452</sup> (ἔφαγεν)

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449. The same verb, ἀναπηδάω occurs three other times in S including Tobit (2:4) and Tobiah (9:6) springing up from their meals.

450. Literally, 'be holding fast to the fish' (ἐγκρατῆς τοῦ ἰχθύος γενου).

451. See the succeeding detailed section on fish organs for complete translation of 6:5-6.

452. Di Lella, *NETS*, translates 'some of the fish' which is correct according to content, and

and put away [some] of it (ἀφῆκεν ἐξ αὐτοῦ),<sup>453</sup>  
 having been salted (ἡλισμένον.) And the two of  
 them walked together until they drew near to  
 Media.

The relevant parts of 6:3-4 in 4Q197:

6:3 a great [fis]h from [ . . . ] [to swal]low (למב[לע])  
 the foot (רגל) of the yout[h][ . . . ] 6:4 '[O]verpower  
 [the] [f]ish [ . . . ] the youth [prevail]ed [and broug]ht it  
 out to the dry land.

The relevant parts of 6:6 in 4Q196 and 4Q197:

6:6 ל[ . . . ] ואף לאורחא שוה<sup>454</sup> מל[ . . . ] יתא  
 (4Q196)<sup>455</sup>  
 [at]e and also for the journey he put/made . . .

6:6 א[ . . . ] ואכל (4Q197)  
 and he ate and also . . .

## 2. Text-Critical Issues

With a fair amount of material preserved from the DSS, including a partial overlap between 4Q196 and 4Q197, there are consequently a number of text-critical matters to discuss. First of all, the Tobit manuscript fragments are important in that they confirm the fish's intent. In Sinaiticus, the fish explicitly 'was wanting (ἐβούλετο)' to swallow (6:3).<sup>456</sup> This expression

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reflects the partitive genitive in the Greek itself.

453. This phrase is relevant to one of the text-critical matters discussed below.

454. The proposed *mem* is hardly visible.

455. J. T. Milik, *Dédicaces faites par des dieux (Palmyre, Hatra, Tyr) et des thiasés sémitiques à l'époque romaine* (Institut français d'archéologie de Beyrouth, Bibliothèque archéologique et historique 92 Paris: Geuthner, 1972, 210, מליחותא שוה ל[הון]; Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte*, 178, שוה במלח[ותא]; Fitzmyer: שוה מל'יחה שאר[ותא]. Discussion to follow in Text-Critical Issues.

456. Cf. G1, 'wanted' (ἐβουλήθη).



of desire, however, is absent in all but one of the OL manuscripts.<sup>457</sup> In Fitzmyer's reconstruction of 4Q197, however, a simple infinitive (למכּלע), can be understood as a purpose clause, as it is indeed found in three OL manuscripts. It is significant that one of these is Reginensis, and thus, as already noted, may have as its *Vorlage* a Greek text differing from G2.<sup>458</sup> Ultimately, however, although Sinaiticus presents the fish's volition somewhat more strikingly than do most of the OL manuscripts and perhaps 4Q197, the fact that the fish *wanted* to swallow some part of Tobiah is never in doubt. Secondly, the use of the phrase בלע רגל in 4Q197 (6:3) confirms that the fish tried to swallow Tobiah's foot in a Semitic form of the story as is the case in Sinaiticus. This is significant because from the combined evidence of OL manuscripts and G1, one might not have expected this.<sup>459</sup> Thirdly and most importantly, here is evidence from two Dead Sea manuscripts that a single individual, Tobiah, ate the fish (אכל),<sup>460</sup> not Tobiah and the angel Raphael (אכלו).<sup>461</sup> Without this data, it would have been difficult to determine what the situation was in earlier Semitic forms of the story. With a single exception, the OL is silent on this issue, and that exception depicts a plurality of eaters, as does G1.<sup>462</sup>

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457. Monacensis, *uolebat*, may be a result of secondary influence by later Greek versions, esp. those of the G1 type.

458. *ut puerum deuoraret*; Alcalà. and Bible de Rosas also have *ut* clauses.

459. In some OL manuscripts (Corbeiensis, Regius, Bobbiensis) the fish interacts with both the foot (encircles) and the entire boy (nearly swallows); others (Reginensis, Monacensis, Bible de Rosas, Alcalà, Sangermanensis 15) lack the foot; the boy is the only target cf. G1.

460. Note well that 4Q197 presents the verb in its entirety.

461. The analysis of 12:19 fully discusses Raphael's eating habits.

462. Of the OL manuscripts only Reginensis has the verb 'to eat' in the plural (*manducauerunt*), cf. G1: ἔφαγον, also in the plural, but n.b. the verb 'to roast', is plural in G1 (ὀπτήσαντες) but singular in Reginensis (*assauit*). Plural roasting is found in Corbeiensis, and Regius. A complete explanation of the OL data is beyond the scope

Lastly, there is also good reason to conclude that some kind of salting activity, as mentioned in Sinaiticus, goes back to a Semitic background text, although the precise Scroll reading is not available. Milik, Fitzmyer, and Beyer each reconstruct this putative text differently. Of these reconstructions, Fitzmyer's <sup>463</sup> *ואף לאורחא שוה מל'יחה שאר'יחא* has the advantage of including the 'rest' of the fish, as found in nearly all OL manuscripts.<sup>464</sup> Moreover, *מל'יחה* ('salty' or 'salted') appears to correspond with Sinaiticus *ἡλισμένον*. There are several problems, however. Insofar as we examined the matter, in Aramaic prose the double accusative construction of *√שׁוה* in the D-stem 'to make X into Y' (here, 'to make salty/salted'), is attested with the order verb, X, Y, not verb Y, X.<sup>465</sup> An Aramaic exception found in poetry appears to be following a Hebrew base text.<sup>466</sup> Whatever the other merits of the readings by Milik and Beyer, they do not adhere to this expected construction. The text critical problems are not over, however. Both Sinaiticus and OL diverge from the DSS. Sinaiticus agrees with 4Q196 that the main verb is 3ms, whereas most OL manuscripts employ an active 3mp.<sup>467</sup> On the other hand, unlike Sinaiticus but with DSS evidence, many OL manuscripts mention the 'journey'.<sup>468</sup> At the same time, some of our best OL manuscripts

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of this study.

463. Fitzmyer, DJD 19, 18.

464. *Ce(a)tera* is present in all except (notably) Reginensis.

465. *Tg N*: Gen. 46:3; Ex. 2:14.

466. 11Q<sup>1</sup>Job 39:6. In biblical Hebrew prose, with *√שׁוה*, verb X Y is the predominant order. If not, either X precedes Y, or X immediately follows the verb. Moreover, the use of Y as a non-substantive adjective is rare.

467. Corbeinsis, Regius, Bobbiensis, Monacensis, Bible de Rosas, Alcalà, Sangermanensis 15: *salierunt*; Reginensis does not mention salting, only 'he left remaining' in the singular (*reliquit*).

468. 4Q196 confirms a Semitic background to *in uia/m* in Corbeinsis, Regius, Bobbiensis,

(including Corbeiensis and Regius) refer to the journey in this way: *tulerunt in uia, cetera autem salierunt* with the journey (*uia*) the object of *fero* ('to carry'). This is in contrast with Fitzmyer's reconstruction in which there is a double object of *the rest* and *salted*. Note further that Reginensis, which clearly represents an independent tradition, and does not even mention salting and has a different verb, 'to leave behind' (*reliquo*) in the singular rather than the plural, also has journey in the same syntactical location. On this basis, although a complete reconstruction is beyond the scope of this study, we would like to suggest that it is with *fero*, *reliquo*, and Sinaiticus's ἀφίημι that 4Q196's שוה corresponds, observing that these would not be a far cry from the primary meaning of שוה is to 'put, place.' Further to this, we may wish to consider placing a full stop after שוה לאורחא שוה.

### 3. Sources

In addition to its text-critical significance, the presence of the verb בלע in 4Q197 invites comparisons with the Book of Jonah as the same verb is used in Jonah 2:1 and the fish there is also described as large.<sup>469</sup> Furthermore, Jonah's prayer inside of his large fish explicitly links the fish with Sheol -- the connection between sea creatures and the underworld in both Tobit and elsewhere will be explored below (see Function).<sup>470</sup> In addition, Jonah may also be

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Monacensis, Reginensis (not in Bible de Rosas, Alcalà, Sangermanensis 15.)

469. Cf. Amy-Jill Levine, "Tobit: Teaching Jews How to Live in the Diaspora," *Bible Review* (1992), 46. This point is also independently suggested by Mitzi Smith, personal communication, 2002.

470. 'From the belly (innards) of the fish' (מִמֵּעַי הַדָּגָה) in 2:2 mirrors 'from the belly of Sheol (מִבֶּטֶן שְׁאוֹל)' in 2:3. Gen. 25:23, for example, illustrates how these two words used for 'belly' are near equivalents. The Old Greek of Jonah translates both with κοιλία.

echoed elsewhere in Tobit.<sup>471</sup>

#### 4. Function of Food in the Unit

Like the size of the fish in both Jonah and Tobit, the role food plays in this scene is considerable. The five references to food and eating in this pericope concern the large fish in one way or another. The two instances of consumption consist of a pair of antithetical actions: the fish's attempt to eat Tobiah (6:3) and Tobiah's consumption of the fish (6:6). The two instances of preparation also form a parallel: Tobiah's roasting of the fish *prior* to eating (6:6) and his salting of the leftovers *afterwards*. Lastly Raphael explains that three of the fish organs (heart, liver, and gall) are 'useful as medicine' (6:5). These food-related elements can best be understood as working together, especially at a symbolic level. Thus, food and eating function differently here than in the passages discussed previously, where they were not especially symbolic. Moreover, unlike most of the mentions of food discussed thus far, here there is no connection between it and righteousness (including specifically Jewish formulations of such). Rather, the account of Tobiah and the fish draws on more ancient and widespread themes.

The symbolic nature of Tobiah's struggle with the fish is established by its setting at night by the river, a wild and dark location that is neither his home (Nineveh) nor his destination (Ecbatana). Anthropologists characterise such circumstances as 'liminal'.<sup>472</sup> Tobiah is also in

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471. See Tob. 3:6 (Jonah 4:3); 13:6, which speaks of the repentance of sinners, certainly is in keeping with the sentiments of Jonah 3.

472. Victor Turner, "Betwixt and Between: the Liminal Period in Rites de passage," in *Symposium on New Approaches to the Study of Religion: Proceedings of the 1964*

a liminal state in that he is in transition between childhood and married adulthood. Monstrous beings are typically associated with such states and the rites of passage that must be undergone for maturation to take place, as well as with darkness.<sup>473</sup> Tobiah arguably must prove his ability to contend with and overcome the fish (at both literal and symbolic levels) before he can get married.<sup>474</sup> As the same time, the struggle with the fish can be seen as a prequel of his subsequent domination of the demon.<sup>475</sup> Nonetheless, if one compares the two events, the scene by the Tigris River with the fish is far more startling, exciting, and scary than the one in the bedroom in Ecbatana with the demon, where the result is a foregone conclusion by 6:17-18 and is already hinted at in 6:8. Arguably, then, Tobiah's encounter with the fish is the *true* struggle of the story. And a good part of this struggle and the symbolism it potentially evokes are accomplished via references to food and eating.

On one level of course, the large fish poses a physical danger.<sup>476</sup> If it were to succeed in swallowing Tobiah's foot, he could conceivably bleed to death. And surely the fear of attack by an ordinary animal can be frightening enough, as indicated by Tobiah's cry (6:3).<sup>477</sup> The

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*Annual Meeting of the American Ethnological Society*, (ed. J. Helm; 1964), 4-20.

473. Turner, "Betwixt and Between," 14. The foundational (though dated) work on rites of passage is Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (London: Routledge, 1960). Although there is no reason to suspect that such a rite is taking place here, the concept of liminality has useful explanatory power here.

474. Cf. Antonio Bonora, *Tobia: Dio á provvidenza* (Padova: Gregoriana, 1993), 43; Jacques Goettmann, *Tobie, livre des fiancés et des pèlerins* (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1966), 70-71, refers particularly the taking in and excretion of food as part of a Jungian symbolic multiplex of life, sex, and death evoked by the fish.

475. Cf. Moore, *Tobit*, 199.

476. As Roger A. Bullard, and Howard Hatton, *A Handbook on Tobit and Judith* (New York: United Bible Societies, 2001), 107, emphasise, 'the fish was not just trying to bite the foot; it wanted to eat it.'

477. It creates a powerful image as well; cf. the domesticated animals eaten by wild animals

idea of fish feeding upon human flesh (both prior to and after death) is based upon reality. As Nicholas Purcell observes, 'fish, alone of the animals eaten in the ancient Mediterranean, could and did eat people.'<sup>478</sup> This theme, along with its associated dread, is expressed as far back as Greek epic.<sup>479</sup> It is featured in classical comedy and poetry.<sup>480</sup> It continues to be featured in the later Hellenistic novels.<sup>481</sup> Anticipating James Bond movies by some centuries, a Roman allegedly delighted in throwing his slaves into the water to be devoured by lampreys.<sup>482</sup> Moreover, the theological implications of being consumed by fish are explored in *Similitudes of Enoch*.<sup>483</sup> Part of the intense dismay evoked by the prospect of becoming fish food may be the reversal of human beings' usual expectation that they will dominate fish and be the eaters, not the eaten.<sup>484</sup> This is certainly the view of the cosmological order in Genesis, where 'the *Adam*' is given authority over the fishes of the sea, among other living creatures (1:26).<sup>485</sup>

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in the allegorical Animal Apocalypse (*1 En.* 85-90).

478. Nicholas Purcell, "Eating Fish: The Paradoxes of Seafood," in *Food in Antiquity*, (ed. J. Wilkins, D. Harvey, and M. Dobson; Forward by Alan Davidson; Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995), 132.

479. *Iliad* 21.122-127.

480. Archippus, 'The Fishes' (5th century B.C.E.), esp. in Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* viii 343c (for all fragments see Augustus Meineke, *Fragmenta comicorum graecorum* (Berolini: G. Reimer, 1839), 205-7); Archestratus, *Life of Luxury* 23 (4th century B.C.E.) in Athenaeus 310e, 163d observes that, 'every fish likes human flesh if it can get it.'

481. Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Clitophon*, 3.5.4; Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe* 2.27.

482. Pliny, *Natural History*, 9.39.37.

483. *1 En.* 61:5. For more on the general theme, including pottery, see Purcell, "Eating Fish", 134. See also the catfish in the Egyptian *The Two Brothers* (Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings II: The New Kingdom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 206 ) I am grateful to Robert Littman for this reference.

484. Levine, 'Diaspora as Metaphor,' 115.

485. See Cousland, "Comedy in Error", 549-50 for further development and citations.

Physical danger, however, is only one possible connotation of what the fish's intended mouthful of human flesh represents. The fish has long been perceived as a major symbol.<sup>486</sup> It has also been suggested that

Inherent in fish symbolism is the sacred power of the abyss, the reciprocities of life and death. Paleolithic fish figurines have been found with the spiral of creativity carved on one side and the labyrinth of death on the other, evincing the spiritual world of early man in which fish represented propagating and perishing, killing and *consuming*, life renewed and sustained (emphasis mine).<sup>487</sup>

Irene Nowell's analysis, performed independently, fits this schema well. She has similarly stressed that the fish in Tobit is connected first to Death and then to life.<sup>488</sup> Nowell also demonstrates that the fish can be seen as a kind of water monster linked with chaos whose conquest and/or transformation is a prerequisite to the created order.<sup>489</sup> Nowell's argument is supported by Anatheia Portier-Young, especially in her comments on the language of descent and ascent.<sup>490</sup> The relationship between the reversal of death and life and the reversal of chaos

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486. Toussaint-Samat, *History of Food*, 311-13; Purcell, 'Eating Fish', 133. The classic part work on the subject is Franz Josef Dölger, *Ichthus: das Fisch Symbol in frühchristlicher Zeit; Ichthus als Kürzung der Namen Jesu IESUS CHRISTOS THEOU UIOS SOTER*; Münster in Westfalia: Aschendorff, 1928-1939).

487. Ann Dunnigan, "Fish," *ER* 5: 346; see 346-347 as well. The doubts of Moore, *Tobit*, 199 on the appreciation of ancient audiences for such symbolism may be thus challenged.

488. Nowell, "Narrative Technique", 219 and Nowell, "Tobit," *NIB*, 985.

489. Nowell, "Tobit," *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, (ed. R.E. Brown, et al.; London: Chapman, 1989), 570 and Nowell, "Tobit," *NIB* 985, 1029; Bonora, *Tobia*, 43.

490. Anatheia Portier-Young, "'Eyes to the Blind': A Dialogue Between Tobit and Job," in *Intertextual Studies in Sirach. and Tobit: Essays in Honor of Alexander A. Di Lella, O.F.M.*, (ed. J. Corley, and V. Skemp; CBQMS 38; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2005), 23-24.

and order is close.<sup>491</sup> In Tobit, both reversals are connected with food and eating: Tobiah succeeds in killing the fish that could have killed him and as we shall see, overcomes chaos on several fronts.

It is telling that Death/the Underworld (Mot, Sheol, Hades, etc.) is depicted with the language of consumption as far back as the Ugaritic corpus and continues to be so depicted into Hebrew Bible and onwards. Death, like the great fish, 'swallows'<sup>492</sup> and 'devours',<sup>493</sup> has a mouth<sup>494</sup>, a throat<sup>495</sup>, and a belly.<sup>496</sup> It is also characterised as insatiable.<sup>497</sup> In fact, in the Ugaritic Ba'al Cycle of 1400 B.C.E., Mot's appetite is compared with that of a sea creature.<sup>498</sup> Indeed, it is within this broader tradition that YHWH's swallowing of death in Isaiah 25:8 functions as a powerful reversal.<sup>499</sup>

As already noted above (Sources), Tobit describes the big fish and its swallowing using language which echoes that of Jonah, and in Jonah, there is also a link between Sheol and a large fish. Furthermore, the engulfing imagery of the fish, and its attack upon Tobiah's *foot* in

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491. Cf. Mot (Death) and Yamm (Sea), Baal's chief enemies in the Baal Cycle of the Ugaritic Corpus (encountered in reverse order).

492. Prov. 1:12; Similitudes of Enoch 56:8 according to Michael Knibb's Eth. II (beta version) (*tewexxetomu*), a reading supported also by Eth. I Tana 9 and EMMML 2080; Eth. I manuscripts present a range of different readings. I thank Loren Stuckenbruck for supplying me with additional manuscript data.

493. KTU 1.5 i 6.

494. KTU 1.5, ii 5; Isa. 5:14; Ps. 141:7; Hab. 2:5 (implied); note also the reference to swallowing in 1QHa 11:15 followed by the opening of Sheol in 11:17.

495. KTU 1.5 i 7.

496. KTU 1.5 ii 4; Jonah 2:3; prayer in Sirach (51:5); 3 Bar. 5:3.

497. KTU 1.5 i 14-15; Prov. 27:20 and 30:16.

498. KTU 1.5 i 15 (*anhr*).

499. This reversal is observed by Theodore J. Lewis, "Sheol," *ABD* II: 113).



a watery locale could conceivably also evoke the fear and danger associated with sexual congress. (The idea that fish can consume male genitalia is found in The Tale of the Brothers and in Egyptian mythology as reported by Plutarch.<sup>500</sup> This, however, is not the case here, because a single foot is in danger.<sup>501</sup> When feet represent genitalia, the dual is used.<sup>502</sup> Nonetheless, a symbolic reading might make use of such a metaphor.) After all, the association between sex and death has a long history.<sup>503</sup> This link has already been made sufficiently explicit in the Book of Tobit through what has reportedly occurred seven times already in Ecbatana in which sexual congress leads to murdered bridegrooms.<sup>504</sup> Read this way, Tobiah's overpowering of the fish is a rehearsal for his behaviour in the bedroom at more levels than one. It may not just be practice for overcoming a monster. We have already commented on how the encounter with the fish by the Tigris is brimming with liminality; likewise is the consummation of a marriage. In a way, of course, the two ideas are really one, with the 'concrete' monster serving in both cases as an embodiment of the danger associated with transitory states.

The fish in Tobit also evokes matters of food and eating when viewed as a kind of chaos monster. Such monsters go back as far as the Baal Cycle of the Ugaritic corpus including

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500. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature II*, 206; Plutarch *Moralia, Isis and Osiris* 358B.

501. Pace Moore, *Tobit*, 199; Cousland, 'Comedy in Error,' 549. Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 206, opposes the reading out of hand.

502. E.g. Isa. 6:2; 2 Kgs. 18:27/Isa. 36:12 *qere* and perhaps Ruth 3:4, 8; רגליה in Dan. 7:7 shows the dual still existed then in Aramaic, although this example is not euphemistic.

503. On Jewish constellations of food, sex and death, including Esther and Judith, see Nathan MacDonald, "Food and Drink in Tobit and Other 'Diaspora Novellas'," in *Studies in the Book of Tobit: A Multidisciplinary Approach*. (M. R. J. Bredin, ed. LSTS 55; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2006), 174-76.

504. The motif of the death of bridegroom in the bedchamber occurs elsewhere in Jewish writings, e.g. 4 Ezra 10:1.

Yamm, the embodiment of the sea and Nahar, the river-deity.<sup>505</sup> They are referred to in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>506</sup> They persist in later Jewish tradition, as will soon be seen. The theme of being swallowed by a sea monster goes back to the Old Greek of Jonah, which translates the 'large fish' of Jonah as a 'sea monster' (κῆτος) followed by 3 Maccabees 6:8 and Matthew 12:40. This may reflect an older Jewish interpretation of the fish that in theory could have circulated at the time and place of the composition of this unit.<sup>507</sup> The fear of being swallowed by sea monsters is also reflected in post-biblical literature.<sup>508</sup> The fact that such creatures and/or personified water are often overcome by YHWH as a part of creation, is also telling, as discussed already. Order is achieved by the domination and organisation of chaos. Such an attainment of order has been treated by folklorists as part of the widespread motif of dragon-slaying.<sup>509</sup> In the case of Tobit, the fish must be destroyed for order to be restored, as the fish's threat to the cosmos is twofold. It both personifies chaos and reverses the roles of fish and humans that God set forth at the time of creation as described in Genesis.

Tobiah's killing of the fish initiates the defeat of death and chaos, but it is his cooking and consumption of (and concomitant harvesting of the organs) that are the critical next steps.

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505. In the Babylonian Theogony, *Enuma Elish*, personified salt water, Tiamat, is also attacked by the god Marduk.

506. John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (University of Cambridge Oriental Publications 35; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Bernard F. Batto, *Slaying the Dragon: Mythmaking in the Biblical Tradition* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox, 1992).

507. This increases the possibility that the fish was explicitly linked to a sea monster, *pace* Moore, *Tobit*, 199. Erwin R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* (New York: Pantheon, 1956) 5: 29-30 observes independently that Jonah's fish was represented iconographically as a sea monster by Christians and attributes the origin to Judaism.

508. *T. Jud.* 21:7; *Asen.* 12:10/11.

509. Lutz Röhrich, "Drache," 788; cf. Nowell, *NIB*, 1026.

They 'turn the tables' and enlist the fish in the service of life and order, including the cosmic order. Tobiah's cookery, which is only briefly described (and possibly for this reason generally ignored), is the only instance in which a character's culinary efforts are presented as a completed action and 'served' immediately.<sup>510</sup> Moreover, it is only here that the mode of cooking is specified. It may be of significance that roasting is viewed as ancient form of cookery, as seen in its importance in Greek and Israelite/Jewish ancestral narratives.<sup>511</sup> Roasting's link with 'primitive' antiquity is well in keeping with the liminal, outdoors setting.<sup>512</sup> Nonetheless, at the simplest level, even roasting transforms the fish's body. It is changed from a raw, wild beast of prey,<sup>513</sup> to cooked food fit for human consumption.<sup>514</sup>

When Tobiah consumes the fish, he furthers the cause of life, extends his power, and creates order, all in interlocking ways. As he incorporates his foe into his own body, he gains life-empowering nourishment.<sup>515</sup> Eating his enemy involves power at two levels, both of which

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510. Slaughtering is mentioned as is Edna making 'many loaves' (possibly a reference to a large feast, see discussion of 8:19) but one never sees a completed act of specific cookery.

511. Ex. 12:8-9, already not universally observed per *m. Pesah*. 4:4; as the idealised cuisine (meat) in the *Odyssey* and *Iliad* (Alfred Heubeck et al., *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 217) and associated with 'the heroic men,' Philo, *Dreams* 2.50.

512. Fernández-Armesto, *Food: a History*, 15. (The fish in Luke 24:42 is broiled as is the fish Zebulon catches for the ill and elderly in *T. Zeb.* 6:5.)

513. Fish were so viewed in classical antiquity (*Iliad* II.24.82); this fish seems to be behaving as such.

514. The point of Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked* (trans. John and Doreen Weightman; London: Cape, 1970), 1, that 'raw' and 'cooked' are useful for expressing more abstract cultural concepts is still well taken.

515. For Bonora, *Tobia*, 43 the roasted and consumed fish provides Tobiah with renewed energy.

are involved in some forms of cannibalism.<sup>516</sup> His consumption renders his victory over the fish absolute and symbolically reflects his literal acquisition of the fish's powers via its organs.<sup>517</sup> This power is linked with the preservation of life and the restoration of health. Tobiah creates order (again in connection with power) when he reinstates the 'proper' domination of the fish by humans<sup>518</sup> and symbolically swallows up Death itself.<sup>519</sup> The consumption of chaos monsters is a particular theme in Israelite/Jewish myth, often in connection with the eschaton.<sup>520</sup> Of course, it cannot be proven that this was a deliberate feature of Tob. 6:6. Nonetheless, the theme attests to an ancient idea that eating was understood as an activity that makes order out of chaos. Clearly, Tobiah does not eat the fish simply because he is not one to pass up a free meal.

The salting of the leftovers is Tobiah's final interaction with his dead enemy and the last step in ordering chaos. It immediately follows the account of the cooking and eating, and is even presented within the same verse so effectively that the three actions go together (6:6). Evidence from the Scrolls and OL manuscripts clearly indicates that the salt is for the journey, so it functions as a preservative. As yet another culinary procedure, salting

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516. James E. Latham, "Food," *ER* 5: 393 and Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Food: a History* (London: Macmillan, 2001), 25-34.

517. Halvor Moxnes, personal communication (March 2004).

518. The eating of animal flesh is integral to their domination by humans (Nick Fiddes, *Meat, A Natural Symbol* (London: Routledge, 1991), 65) I thank Douglas Davies for bringing this work to my attention; see further detail from Fiddes in Chapter Six.

519. Cf. Isa. 25:8 in which YHWH swallows death forever.

520. Possibly Ps. 74:14; *1 En.* 60:24; *4 Ezra* 6:52; *2 Bar.* 29:4; *b.B. Bat.* 75a.; *TgPs-J* to Gen. 1:21 reads speaks of Leviathan being 'prepared'. See further Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (trans. H. Szold; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1947) 5: 43-44, 48.

transforms the roasted flesh into a food product of greater durability, further removing it from its original wild state.<sup>521</sup> In addition, salt was and is highly important throughout world culture in medicine<sup>522</sup> and ritual<sup>523</sup>, possessing a range of deeply significant symbolic meanings.<sup>524</sup> But, notably, none of these meanings are brought out in the present narrative. This includes its importance in ritual acts. It also includes its importance in medicine. Whether salt meant anything more in some earlier form of the story can only be guessed at.<sup>525</sup> Zimmermann is technically incorrect about the use of salt as 'magical', but raises an important point: could salt have been imagined to have greater powers than just as a preservative in some earlier, even pre-Tobit, stage of the motif?

Taken together, the fish's attempt to swallow Tobiah's foot, followed by Tobiah's cooking, eating, and preserving of the fish's flesh and his extraction of its medicinal organs form a narrative that evokes themes of death, chaos, and power. Indeed, if the only point of the story was for Tobiah to get the organs, any number of less fearsome alternative narratives could have been presented.<sup>526</sup> That the story does not present such versions suggests that the fish is

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521. See the discussion of fish consumption above on salted fish.

522. In BAM i 23,1, *salt* is one of the ingredients mixed with gall for the treatment of an eye condition comparable to that of Tobit. (Von Soden, 'Fischgalle als Heilmittel', 81). See further Eberhard J. Wormer, 'A Taste for Salt in the History of Medicine, <http://www.tribunes.com/tribune/sel/worm.htm>, where he refers to his larger work, *Heilkraft des Salzes* (Munich: Südwest Verlag), 1995.

523. *Maqlu* VI 111-113, IX 118-120 where the salt itself is addressed in an incantation, is especially telling. See also 2 Kgs. 2:21 and *T.Sol. A* 18:34.

524. See further James E. Latham, "Salt," *ER* 13: 23-24 (for a cross-cultural perspective) James Latham, *The Religious Symbolism of Salt* (Theologie Historique 64; Paris: Beuchesne, 1982) on its importance in Christianity); Bergier, *Sel*, 145-150; Maguelonne Toussaint-Samat, *A History of Food* (trans. Anthea Bell; Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 474-475; Raphael Patai, *On Jewish Folklore*, 388-390.

525. Zimmermann, *Tobit*, 81.

526. E.g. the fish could have been purchased or found beached ashore or it could have

more than just a swimming organ bank.

In addition to the symbolic importance of the big fish, the way the story is told merits attention. Clearly, as just noted, the fish's attack upon Tobiah and the resultant struggle adds to the drama of the scene. Furthermore, as has been also indicated, two internal structural oppositions are present: (1) the fish's attempt to eat Tobiah and Tobiah's eating of that which sought to eat him and (2) the two acts of preparation, one before and the other after eating. Tobiah's meal may also be compared instructively with the meal his father eats in chapter 2. If time slowed down in chapter 2 to describe the arrival of Tobit's meal, Tobiah's eating of the fish in 6:6, which is the only actual instance of eating in this chapter, produces the opposite effect. Preparation, eating, and conservation of leftovers all occur in rapid succession, framed by the ripping out of the fish's organs at the start and the approach to Media at the end.<sup>527</sup> Also in contrast to Tobit's meal, which is eaten indoors in a specific setting, complete with dining furniture, anonymous preparer(s) and servers, and a wide variety of nice things to eat, Tobiah's meal occurs outdoors, with no furniture, is self-prepared and self-served, and is (apparently) limited to fish.<sup>528</sup> These contrasts underscore the differences between the home setting and the liminal setting. At the same time, they assign to both father and son the consumption of a major meal that takes place close in time to dramatic action involving injury or intended injury by wild animals;<sup>529</sup> in the former case, by

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conveniently leapt out of the sea and fall before him (as was the case as described by Pliny the Elder, *The Natural History*, 9.22.55.).

527. All of these events occur within a single verse in the present form of the story.

528. We have also noted above the possible parallel in what is eaten, in that Tobit's ὀψάρια (2:3) can be translated as 'fishes,' but have suggested that it is less likely.

529. Levine, 115n37, detects a structural correspondence between the attack upon Tobit's

birds (which are of the sky domain above) and in the latter case, by fish (which are of the sea domain below).<sup>530</sup>

To conclude, Tobiah's encounter with the fish may be read symbolically, especially in connection with food and eating. A Jewish link may be seen in the minimum with the Jonah allusions. At the same time, the symbolism draws upon widespread and ancient themes.

## 5. Narrative Tensions and Possible Redaction

Turning to matters of redaction, we find that for the most part, the narrative seems to flow quite well.<sup>531</sup> The presence of the dog, (which was eaten in classical antiquity both for food and medicine), is the only jarring note, as it appears without any introduction.<sup>532</sup> The absence of major problems is worth noting for both immediate and larger scale reasons. On the smaller scale, as we will discuss, below, it is notable that this passage is concerned with neither of the two topics that are occasionally linked with narrative disturbance: righteous behaviour and Jewish practice. More broadly, here is another example (Tobit's Shavuot meal for the most part has also been noted as such a case) of how the Book of Tobit is perfectly capable of presenting a coherent narrative. This data must be weighed in when considering those sections of the story that are not so easy to follow.

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head (better, face?) and Tobiah's foot.

530. The treatment of birds and fishes/sea creatures as parallel categories is found e.g. in Gen. 1:20; Qoh. 9:12; Philo, *Ebr.* 219.

531. This may kept in mind when evaluating the smoothness of other passages.

532. Dalby, *Siren Feasts*, 60 lists sources. *m.Yoma* 8:6 records a minority opinion that the (unclean) liver of a כלב שומט can be fed to one bit by it. The more general linkage between dogs and healing goes back at least as far as Sumeria, but is beyond the scope of this study.

## 6. Background: Fish in General and Tobit's Attacker in Particular

To put what we have observed into a wider context, we here provide some more data about the consumption of fish in antiquity, about the speculation regarding the identification of the creature who attacked Tobiah, and about the use of fish in various rituals, including weddings. We begin with the consumption of fish. Fish were eaten in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and along the ancient Mediterranean littoral, including Greece and Israel/Judaea, although the amount eaten is not always certain.<sup>533</sup> Ashurnasirpal II's famous stele boasts that 10,000 fish were served at the banquet in honour of his new palace.<sup>534</sup> Fish were despised in Greek epics, especially the *Iliad*, but later, they were associated with luxury (esp. in Athens).<sup>535</sup> Numbers 11:5 suggests a popular association of fish with Egypt.<sup>536</sup> Amos 4:2 and Nehemiah 13:16 as well as the name 'Fish Gate' (e.g. Zeph. 1:10) attest to the consumption of these animals in Israel and Judaea, but they are not mentioned as part of the daily diet of either Solomon or Nehemiah.<sup>537</sup> Fish appear more frequently in the canonical gospels, albeit without any

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533. Jean Bottéro, *The Oldest Cuisine in the World: Cooking in Mesopotamia* (trans. Teresa Lavender Fagan; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 16, 18, 19; William J. Darby, Paul Ghalioungui, and Louis Grivetti, *Food: the Gift of Osiris* (London: Academic Press, 1977), 337-38, 355-368; Dalby, *A to Z*, 144.

534. Albert Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1972), 2:176.

535. Malcolm Heath, "Do Heroes Eat Fish?: Athenaeus on the Homeric Lifestyle," in *Athenaeus and His World: Reading Greek Culture in the Roman Empire*. (David Braund, John Wilkins, David Harvey, and Mike Dobson, eds. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000), 342-44 explores this topic with nuance.

536. *Asenath*, set in Egypt, treats fish as a luxury item (10:13/14).

537. 1 Kgs. 5:2-3; Neh. 5:18; fish consumption in Palestine, even later in Roman times where there was an influx of fish products, should not be overestimated (Magen Broshi, *Bread, Wine, Walls and Scrolls* (JSOPSup 36. New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 134-135).



necessary gourmet connotations. A full range of fish products is described in the Mishnah, including salted fish.<sup>538</sup> (Salted fish was consumed throughout the 'Greek world' certainly by the fourth century B.C.E.).<sup>539</sup>

We now turn to debates about whether the creature was a fish, and if so, which kind of fish it was. This discussion, as well as the one that follows about fish rituals may serve as a segue-way to the succeeding unit concerned with the medicinal organs of the fish in the Book of Tobit. Some scholars have suggested that Tobit's underlying story was in fact not concerned with a fish. However, the behaviour of the creature and the ease with which it is captured in the story point to its being a fish rather than any of the other animals (crocodile, hippo) some scholars have proposed for a hypothetical earlier form of the tale.<sup>540</sup> Large fish are certainly found in the Tigris today.<sup>541</sup> Nonetheless, assigning a specific species to the fish is difficult and may be beside the point.<sup>542</sup> The most extensive Egyptian medical text, the Ebers papyrus, does prescribe the gall of a specific fish ('*bdw*') for a condition that may be similar to

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538. *m. Ned.* 6:4 particularly attests to Jewish consumption of fish of various sizes, and modes of preparation (or lack thereof), including salted, pickled, boiled, and raw.

539. Dalby, *Siren Feasts*, 76; see further on salted fish, Jean François Bergier, *Une histoire du sel* (avec une annexe technique par Albert Hahling; Fribourg: Office du livre, 1982), 135-38.

540. Schumpp, *Buch Tobit*, 129; Moore, *Tobit*, 199. The recommended use of the gall of the crocodile against films on the eye and of other parts for fumigations of the uterus (Pliny, *Natural History*, 28.28) is nonetheless intriguing.

541. Robert Littman (personal communication June, 2006) has shown me a picture of a salmon from the Tigris as long as a human adult.

542. Adalbert Schulte, *Beiträge zur Erklärung und Textkritik des Buches Tobias* (Biblische Studien 19; Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1914), 45; Moore, *Tobit*, 19; Ego, *Buch Tobit*, 461; Schüngel-Straumann, *Tobit*, 116.

Tobit's.<sup>543</sup> It also recommends the gall of a tortoise for the same condition, however.<sup>544</sup> This suggests that gall, soon to be discussed below, is the operative category, rather than a specific type of fish.<sup>545</sup> It is quite possible that more than one kind of fish gall could have been in use, *pace* von Soden, who suggests that the *kuppû* fish listed in a Mesopotamian medical text (BAM 23,1) may be the same as the one mentioned in Tobit.<sup>546</sup>

For what it is worth, the *Testament of Solomon* A 5:10, in its discussion of how to remove Asmodeus, identifies the creature as a sheatfish (γλάνις), a large European river fish (*Silurus Glanus*) that was eaten salted.<sup>547</sup> It was said to be so large that horses or oxen were needed to bring it out of the water, and it was used to remove demons.<sup>548</sup> It is also of the catfish family and thus unkosher.<sup>549</sup> There are, however, other examples of fish used as apotropaic agents such as fish-shaped amulets that were set on lamps.<sup>550</sup> Fish muzzle and bone were also used to make smoke in Egyptian writings.<sup>551</sup> Furthermore, as recently as 1971 (non-Jewish) wedding rituals in Russia employed fish as apotropaic agents and to promote fertility

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543. John F. Nunn, *Ancient Egyptian Medicine* (London: British Museum, 1996, 202.

544. Ebers 405; Ebers 347; cf. Pliny, *Natural History* 32.14. 37.

545. Cf. Bernd Kollmann, "Göttliche Offenbarung magisch-pharmakologischer Heilkunst im Buch Tobit," ZAW 106 (1994), 294.

546. Wolfram von Soden, "Fischgalle als Heilmittel für die Augen," AfO 21 (1966), 81-82.

547. Dalby, *Food in the Ancient World from A-Z* (London: Routledge, 2003), 299-300, with illustration.

548. LSJ, 1599; Schumpp, *Buch Tobit*, 130.

549. It lacks scales (Lev. 11:9-11/Deut.14:9-10); cf. Schumpp, *Buch Tobit*, 130.

550. Dölger, *Der heilige Fisch in den antiken Religionen und im Christentum*, Textband (vol. 2 of *Ichthus: das Fisch Symbol in frühchristlicher Zeit; Ichthus als Kürzung der Namen Jesu IESUS THEOU CHRISTOS UIOS SOTER*; Münster in Westfalia: Aschendorff, 1922), 181.

551. Kollmann, 'Heilkunst,' 292.

(possibly related concepts).<sup>552</sup> Indeed, fertility rituals involving fish, some of which include consumption, are certainly widespread.<sup>553</sup> It probably should not be too surprising, therefore, that specifically Jewish fertility rituals involving fish have been documented, albeit not from ancient times.<sup>554</sup> Such evidence, in illustrating the propensity of Jews to participate in wider folk traditions in more recent times, may be (with the appropriate caution) be extrapolated to Jewish behaviour in the more distant past. Indeed, we even find that ancient associations between fish with genitalia and sex (not merely fertility *per se*)<sup>555</sup> are also attested in the Talmud.<sup>556</sup>

## 7. Leading Characteristics

The leading characteristics of the food-linked references of this passage are incredibly important. If we may vary our usual order of presentation of this unit, we must stress that what takes place by the Tigris has nothing to do with righteous behaviour or with Jewish practice. Rather it is the symbolic role of food, expressing as it does power, liminality and restoration of chaos to order that sets the tone. It draws, as noted above, on the ancient theme of monster slaying and the eat-or-be-eaten scenario with which it plays itself out is highly dramatic. We should also draw attention that here, unlike chapters 1 and 4 and even to some

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552. W. F. Ryan, *The Bathhouse at Midnight: An Historical Survey of Magic and Divination in Russia* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 75; see also 284.

553. Raphael Patai, *On Jewish Folklore* (Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 1983), 348

554. Patai, *On Jewish Folklore*, 348-49.

555. Apuleius, *Apology* 33 is an early example. See further Dölger, *Der heilige Fisch*, 186-188.

556. *b. Yoma* 75a; see *b. Ketub. 61a* on the positive effects of fish eating by parents for their progeny.

extent parts of chapter 2, the significance of food and its consumption is not quite as blatantly obvious, aside from (as we shall next discuss) the role of the fish as a source of organs with special powers.

Interestingly, although we have gone into great detail in analysing the important of Tobiah's cooking, eating and salting of the fish, the narrative gives the most attention to the fish's attempt to eat part of Tobiah. What Tobiah does, as we have observed, is quickly told within a single verse. Whatever degree they are in the spotlight, however, all of these elements are actions; none of them are part of discourse.

### C. Medicinal Organs (6, 8, 11)

Given what we have already observed about fish as apotropaic and fertility agents (see Background, above) that fish organs are significant in this story does not sound quite as strange as it might seem at first blush. We come now to a detailed examination of these organs and their deployment in the Book of Tobit.

#### 1. Background About Food and Medicine

The boundary between food and medicine was sometimes as thin in antiquity as it is today.<sup>557</sup>

Of the numerous natural substances that form the backbone of traditional medicine, which

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557. Henry E. Sigerist, *A History of Medicine* (2 vols.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1951), 1:114-115. According to John Wilkins and Shaun Hill 'writing about food in a practical way in ancient Greece was first and foremost a sub-division of medical writing,' (Archestratus, *The Life of Luxury: Europe's Oldest Cookery book* (translated, with introduction & commentary by John Wilkins & Shaun Hill; illustrations by Philippa Stockley; Totnes, Devon: Prospect Books, 1994), 16.

included vegetable, mineral, and animal (including human!) matter some were and are edible. Many edible substances are genuinely effective as medicinal agents or can facilitate the delivery of the medicine.<sup>558</sup> Food and medicine are similar in other respects. Both 'harvest' and order elements of the natural world in the service of human life; indeed it is likely no accident that both can be made using recipes, which always feature ingredients and instructions on proper preparation. At the same time, one finds substantial use of animal parts that are not typically eaten in medical recipes. To list just a few examples, Mesopotamian medicine employed the head of a lizard, the bones of a monkey, the horns of a goat, and human bones, skulls, flesh, teeth and testicles.<sup>559</sup> Examples of ancient Egyptian medicine ingredients include cat placenta, donkey testicles, brains, and a mouse cooked in oil. Both made use of blood, urine, fat, and especially, as noted previously, excrement.<sup>560</sup> Still later, animal products of various kinds are referred to in such writings as Pliny's *Natural History* and in the Talmud.<sup>561</sup> As the medicine mentioned in Tobit is always applied externally, its connections with food are largely due to its position in the narrative itself.<sup>562</sup>

In discussing the medicinal organs of Tobit, we must keep in mind that Sinaiticus does not employ separate categories for the removal of a demon and the restoration of eyesight.

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558. For instance, honey, one of the most widely used substances in Egyptian medicine functioned both as a carrier and as an effective antibacterial and antifungal agent (Nunn, *Ancient Egyptian Medicine*, 148).

559. Herrero, *La Therapeutique Mésopotamienne*, 51-53.

560. Nunn, *Ancient Egyptian Medicine*, 149-150; Herrero, *Therapeutique Mésopotamienne*, 53.

561. E.g. *b.Shabb.* 77b.

562. Although most drugs in antiquity were taken orally, they could be applied via the rectum, vagina, externally, or with general fumigation, (Nunn, *Ancient Egyptian Medicine*, 143; cf. Herrero, *Therapeutique Mésopotamienne*, 87-113).

Raphael descends to 'cure' (ἰάομαι) both of them (3:17).<sup>563</sup> Tobiah also uses θεραπεύω to refer to both types of healing in 12:3. Further, both sets of organs (heart and liver, gall) are categorised the same as a 'medicine' or 'drug'.<sup>564</sup> That 'medicine' here may include a variety of techniques dovetails with the approach of ancient Mesopotamian medicine.<sup>565</sup> As JoAnn Scurlock and Burton Anderson observe, 'there is no inherent conflict between the ancient Mesopotamian belief that malevolent spirits are causers of disease and the observed beneficial effects of herbs, tree resins, and minerals.'<sup>566</sup> Medicine in Pharaonic Egypt similarly did not strictly separate categories.<sup>567</sup> Indeed any separation of the two acts of healing into magic and medicine is not based on any distinction made in the story itself.<sup>568</sup>

## 2. Harvest (6:5-6)

The first reference to the organs comes as Raphael advises Tobiah what to do with the fish he has just overpowered. He is to take out the gall, heart, and liver, discarding the intestines. At this stage, the angel points out that they possess medicinal value, but does not provide any

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563. Fitzmyer, DJD 19, 15, reconstructs נ"ם[נ"י].

564. More precisely, φαρμακόν (LSJ, 1917) and □□ (see 4Q197 6:7; Jastrow, 998) can both denote a drug that is either 'poisonous' or 'healing'.

565. Stefan M. Maul, "Die 'Lösung vom Bann': Überlegungen zu altorientalischen Konzeptionen von Krankheit und Heilkunst," in *Magic and Rationality in Ancient Near Eastern and Graeco-Roman Medicine*. (H. F. J. Horstmanshoff, M. Stol, and C.R. van Tilburg. Boston: Brill, 2004), 79-95.

566. JoAnn Scurlock, and Burton R. Anderson, *Diagnoses in Assyrian and Babylonian Medicine* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 11.

567. Paul Ghalioungui, *La médecine des pharaons: magie et science médicale dans l'Égypte ancienne* (préface du Pr. François Daumas; Paris: R. Laffont, 1983), 17.

568. Pace Bernd Kollmann, "Göttliche Offenbarung," 291-93. Part of the problem is Kollmann's incorrect privileging of G1 which does not mention 'medicine'. See further Loren T. Stuckenbruck, "The Book of Tobit and the Problem of Magic," in *Jüdische Schriften in ihrem antik-jüdischen und urchristlichen Kontext*, (ed. H. Lichtenberger, and G. S. Oegema; SJSHRZ 1; Gütersloh: Gütersloher, 2002), 258-69.

further detailed information as to what conditions the organs are to be used against, nor how they are to be prepared.

#### a. The Translated Text

6:5 And the angel said to him, ‘Rip open the fish and take out its gall (ἡ χολή) and heart (ἡ καρδία) and liver (τὸ ἥπαρ) and stow them away with you but cast out the entrails (ἔγκατα) for its gall and heart and liver are useful as medicine (εἰς φάρμακον). 6:6 And having ripped open the fish, the lad gathered together the gall and the heart and the liver [Tobiah roasts, eats, puts away salted leftovers.]<sup>569</sup>

The use of the heart, liver, and gall of the fish in Tobit is medicinal, even though the organs are derived from a fish that is cooked, eaten, and salted.<sup>570</sup> As noted above in our discussion of the function of food in the previous section, the acquisition of the organs may be tied in symbolically with consumption. In particular, it may be significant that Tobiah will not find out precisely how the organs are medicinal until he has actually consumed the fish.<sup>571</sup> In

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569. 6:5 and take out [...] its [...] your hand and [its] entrails ([מַעֲוָה]') [...] its [...] and its liver (כִּבְדָּה) [...] 6:6 and [...] its [he]art and [...] the [f]ish (4Q197). S's command to take the organs and then remove the guts reflects a Semitic ordering. One would not know this from the OL manuscripts that refer to the entrails (Corbeiensis, Regius, Bobbiensis, Bible de Rosas, Alcalà, Sangermanensis 15), which do so only after the organs are labelled as medicine.

570. Even the entrails that are cast out here could be eaten, although in Tobiah's case, they would not be easily portable. The Greek fish sauce γάρος (later e.g. Roman *garum* and *liquamen*) was made through fermentation via the intestinal enzymes of fish entrails as early as the fifth century B.C.E (Dalby, *Siren Feasts*, 75; Toussant-Samat, *History of Food*, 373-374; cf. Pliny, *Natural History*, 31.43.93). See e.g. *m. Ned.* 6:4 for evidence of Jewish consumption.

571. Cf. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols* 5:45-46, 'It seems to me significant that Tobias, after taking out the gall, heart and liver "roasted part of the fish and did eat, and left part thereof salted.'

addition, as we have already noted (see above, chapter two) the gall appears to be a counterpart to the negative power of bird excrement earlier in the story.<sup>572</sup> Both, moreover, are linked to food in some way, but neither would be considered edible to most humans (on gall, see below).

#### b. Background: Preservation of the Organs (Especially the Gall)

The employment of animal organs in the Book of Tobit, is typical of ancient medicine, as discussed at the beginning of this section. It is unusual, however, that the organs, especially the gall, are not preserved with any additional ingredient. In most documented references to the use of gall for eye spots/films/patches, one or more ingredients are added, some of which are edible. Most of them function as a preservative and/or make it easier to make a salve (honey, stale oil, or galena (lead sulphide) are typical examples).<sup>573</sup> Indeed, Pliny states that in all cases gall is to be boiled in water, dried, and preserved in honey.<sup>574</sup> To the argument that Tobiah would lack some of these ingredients or the time to boil and dry the organs, one need only reply by citing a Mesopotamian medical text for treating eye spots that includes salt.<sup>575</sup> Why doesn't Tobiah use the salt, which he clearly has, to salt the gall? Unlike the case with the fish's heart and liver, as discussed below, foul odour plays no role in its curative power.

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572. Cf. Cousland, "Comedy in Error," 546-7.

573. Ebers 347, 405 and Pliny, *Natural History*, 32.14.38 and 32.24 69-70.

574. Pliny, *Natural History* 28.40.146

575. BAM 23,1 (Von Soden, 'Fischgalle als Heilmittel,' 81) Other ingredients, such as butter to make it into a salve, could be mixed later when Tobiah arrives home.



c. Leading Characteristics

The organs, gathered from a fish that is eaten, are definitely in the foreground and are critical to the all-important cures of both Tobit and Sarah. They are part of real-time action as well as discourse (gathering them, and, soon afterwards, instructions on how to deploy them.) Using fish organs to cure illness may be of divinely given advice, but like the previous section discussing Tobiah's struggle with the fish, the behaviour advised in this passage has nothing to do with righteousness and is certainly not limited to Israelites/Jews.

3. Heart and Liver (6:7-8; 17-18; 8:2-4)

Having discussed the harvest of all three fish organs, we now first consider the heart and liver followed by a separate discussion of the gall. We first bring together material in chapter 6 in which Raphael twice gives instructions on how to use the heart and liver, followed by the depiction of their actual deployment in chapter 8. It is important to read each of these three accounts closely, because there are important differences, however subtle they may at first seem.

a. The Translated Texts

*First Explanation of Their Use*

6:7<sup>576</sup> And then, the lad asked the angel and said to him, ‘Azariah, brother, what medicine (φάρμακον)

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576. 6:7 the youth [ask]ed the an[gel] [ . . . ] my brother tel[l] [ . . . ] heart of the fish and its liver [ . . . ] about it (4Q196); 6:7 [s]aid to him Azariah my brother, what medicine (□□) is in the heart of the fish and [its?] liv[er] (4Q197); in the heart (לבב).

[is there] in the heart<sup>577</sup> and the liver<sup>578</sup> of the fish<sup>579</sup> and in the gall? 6:8 And he [Raphael] said to him, 'As for the fish's heart and liver, smoke [them] before a man or woman for whom there is a occurrence<sup>580</sup> with a demon or evil spirit and every occurrence will flee from him [or her] and it will not remain with him [or her] for ever [more].<sup>581</sup> [Angel discusses gall.]<sup>582</sup>

### *Second Explanation of Their Use*<sup>583</sup>

6:17 And when you enter into the bridal chamber<sup>584</sup>, take [some] of the liver<sup>585</sup> of the fish and the heart and place [them] upon the ashes of the incense and a stench will exude (ἡ ὁσμὴ πορεύσεται). 6:18 And the demon will smell [it]<sup>586</sup> (ὁσφρανθήσεται) and will flee and it will not be

577. Lit., 'what is the medicine in the heart . . . (τί τὸ φάρμακον ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ)'.

578. That S's order of heart, liver, and then gall goes back to a Semitic source is confirmed by 4Q197. Data is otherwise insufficient from OL manuscripts and G1, all of which have a variety of different permutations.

579. 'Heart of the fish and in its liver' (4Q196, 4Q197) corresponds with the slightly different 'in the heart and the liver of the fish' of S.

580. ἀπάντημα; cf. the use of this word in the Old Greek to render the פָּגַע of פָּגַע רָע, a phrase which is in parallel with שָׁשׁ (1Kings 5:18) and Qoh. 9:11. Perhaps the term should be translated as 'affliction', following Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 208. Compare cognate verb in OG 1 Sam. 22:17.

581. 6:8 smoke it before a man or women afflicted by a demon or [evil] spirit their going about] will not go about forever (4Q197). S expresses the same basic idea, with different wording (√סָחַר 'go about' and not ἀπάντημα 'occurrence') and does not reflect the cognate accusative of 4Q197. The verb ὀχλέω 'trouble, disturb' is used instead in G3 and G1 (cf. Acts 5:16).

582. See section on gall for full translation.

583. 6:17 t]ake some of the heart [ . . . ] 6:18 [ . . . ] the demon [4Q196]; In S the liver is listed before the heart.

584. Third Greek, 'And when you take it and enter *towards her* into the bedchamber'. This version places a greater emphasis on Sarah's body. See further shortly below.

585. ἐκ τοῦ ἥπατος

586. The demon's ability to smell is consistent with the view of *b. Hagigah 16a* that demons can eat, drink, propagate, and die and perhaps less so with Ps.-Clem. Hom. 9:10 (cited by Dale C. Allison, *Testament of Abraham* (CEJL; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 143) that indicates demons are incapable of eating unless possessing a human body. We must keep in mind, however, that the Book of Tobit is remarkably vague as to the demon's precise location.

seen around her any longer for all eternity.<sup>587</sup> And when you are about to be with her, both of you [must] first rise and pray . . .

*Tobiah's Use of Heart and Liver*<sup>588</sup>

8:2 And Tobiah remembered the words of Raphael and he took the liver of the fish and the heart out of the bag where he had [them] and he placed [them] upon the ashes of the incense.<sup>589</sup> 8:3 And the stench of the fish hindered [it] and the demon ran away up into the parts of Egypt<sup>590</sup> and Raphael, having gone, bound him hand and foot there and bound him immediately.<sup>591</sup> 8:4 And . . . . Tobiah rose up from the bed and said to her, 'Kinswoman, arise and let us pray.'

b. Function of Food in the Unit

As we can see above, smell, an intimately physical sense that is used to appreciate food, serves as the major means of removing the demon. Amy-Jill Levine has characterised the burning of the heart and liver as a kind of inverted sacrifice<sup>592</sup> (sacrifices are part of Greek bridal customs).<sup>593</sup> This fits within the framework of ancient religious custom, in which

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587. καὶ οὐκέτι μὴ φανῇ περὶ αὐτήν.

588. No DSS fragments correspond to this unit.

589. Some OL manuscripts mention the removal from the bag before the organs (Corbeiensis, Regus, Bible de Rosas, Sangermanensis 15; Bobbiensis and Alcalà); with the exception of Bobbiensis, the organs are placed on glowing coals rather than ashes.

590. ἄνω εἰς τὰ μέρη Αἰγύπτου. G1, G3 (with different wording from Vaticanus), and OL manuscripts offer the more intelligible reading of the demon fleeing to the upper parts of Egypt.

591. In *T.Sol.* A's account of how to defeat Asmodeus (5:9), it is the liver and *gall smoking* upon coals, not the liver and heart on ashes that chase him away.

592. Levine, 'Diaspora as Metaphor,' 116.

593. These obligatory sacrifices took place within a year of the wedding and do not appear to be home rituals (Matthew Dillon, *Girls and Women in Classical Greek Religion* (London: Routledge, 2002), 221); see Julian Morgenstern, *Rites of Birth, Marriage, Death and Kindred Occasions Among the Semites* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1966), 112-115 on bridal sacrifices among the Bedouin.

pleasant odours were used for gods and unpleasant ones for demons. Both YHWH and the gods of Mesopotamia were treated to pleasant scents.<sup>594</sup> In contrast, Mesopotamian medical texts and the Talmud both refer to the removal of unwanted demons or spirits using bad smells.<sup>595</sup> In the case of Tobit, the use of the organs might further be linked to food through the third part of Lévi-Strauss' famous culinary triangle: the rotten.<sup>596</sup> See the next chapter of this study for a discussion of how the demon is removed shortly after a meal is completed.

### c. Narrative Tensions and Possible Redaction

Although smell plays a role in the second and third references to the use of heart and liver, it is worth noting that it is not explicitly part of the first account, as we shall see more fully below. This is but one of several differences among the three accounts.<sup>597</sup> Obviously, the first explanation is general, referring to both men and women as well as to both demons and evil spirits, whereas the second and third descriptions apply specifically to Sarah and her demon. Nowell has argued that that the threefold descriptions of the healing procedures are designed to increase the dramatic tension through the use of additional detail.<sup>598</sup> This analysis may

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594. Barbara Böck, "'When You Perform the Ritual of 'Rubbing'': On Medicine and Magic in Ancient Mesopotamia," *JNES* 62 (2003), 10; רִיחַ נִיחֹחַ appears some forty times in priestly-oriented writings in the Hebrew Bible and incense is mentioned about twice as much, usually in a sacrificial context.

595. E.g. sulfur (Erica Reiner, *Šurpu: A Collection of Sumerian and Akkadian Incantations* (AfO. Beiheft 11; Graz: 1958) 53, line 5); meat placed on coals with wine is recommended in *b.Gittin* 67b to remove a spirit. See also Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 85, 3.

596. Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*, 490.

597. Rabenau, *Buch Tobit*, assigns the instructions of 6:18 and Raphael's pursuit of 8:3 to his third layer of the story; the rest he thinks belongs to the earliest part of the story (157, 236 and 238) Deselaers, *Buch Tobit*, places the former in the second layer and the latter in the first (396; cf. also 49).

598. Nowell, "Narrative Technique", 101. Cf. Moore, *Tobit*, 201.

apply to some of the differences.<sup>599</sup> For example, in 6:8, Raphael says one must *smoke* the organs as part of his explanation of how to do it. The two other instances give an even more specific instruction that the organs must be *placed on incense ashes*. This apparently will yield the smoke required. 6:18 and 8:3 do not refer to smoke, however, but instead, as mentioned above, to *odour*.<sup>600</sup> This still need not be an inconsistency, as the use of pungent smoke is well attested in antiquity for a variety of uses, including demon removal, as noted above.

What is strange, however, is that the second and third accounts do not explicitly refer to the organs being smoked *before Sarah*. Notably, however, without any attested antecedents, four medieval Jewish manuscripts do state in 8:3 that the organs were smoked before Sarah.<sup>601</sup> In three of these instances, the organ(s) are placed directly under her clothing.<sup>602</sup> Could 6:17 and 8:3 wish to downplay the possible implication of 6:8 that the demon could somehow be linked to Sarah's body? After all, most later folk motifs, such as the Dangerous Bride, link the source of the evil to the woman's body more directly, as the female slave does with her

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599. Olrik's "Law of Three", which Nowell refers to, may apply, but the detail of technique does not markedly increase from the second to the third instance.

600. Note that in S the demon does not smell the odour in 8:3 (as it does in the G1) as predicted by 6:18; rather it is 'hindered' by the odour.

601. According to Constantinople 1519 8:1, Tobiah actually 'smokes out' Sarah, himself, and the entire house.

602. Constantinople 1516, Codex Gaster, and the Bodleian Aramaic: the heart (only) is heated first and deliberated placed under Sarah's garments. Vaginal fumigation is an ancient medical procedure, e.g. UC 32057 (lot VI.I) Case 1 Col 1, line 4 (Mark Collier, and Stephen Quirke, *The UCL Lahun Papyri: Religious, Literary, Legal, Mathematical and Medical* (with a chapter by Annette Imhausen and Jim Ritter; BAR International Series 1209; Oxford: Archaeopress, 2004), 58.

accusation that Sarah is a murderer (Tob. 3:8).<sup>603</sup> The notion that women could have undesirable creatures inside them is reflected in the Talmud, as well.<sup>604</sup> But by the time Tobiah actually deploys the organs in 8:3, unlike 6:18, Sarah is not even mentioned. Instead, in this final instance, the focus is fully upon the demon, its flight and capture, the latter two of which are new elements.<sup>605</sup> A final difference between the first instance and the last two is that prayer is mentioned only in the latter two instances.

#### d. Background

We now may comment on the edibility of these organs. According to a recent open-content textbook on outdoor survival skills, the heart and liver are the only two fish organs worth eating.<sup>606</sup> In addition, Greeks of antiquity ate just about every body part imaginable of animals, including the heart and liver.<sup>607</sup> The reason why the heart was chosen for demon removal is unclear.<sup>608</sup> Liver, which contains vitamins B-12 and A, has wider medicinal applications, especially when consumed or injected.<sup>609</sup> Fish liver was viewed as especially

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603. See this study's introductory chapter on the 'Dangerous Bride'.

604. *b. Shab. 110a* states that the scent of burnt fat meat combined with cress and wine will remove a snake that has entered a woman's vagina.

605. Raphael's actions may suggest a concern that no one else be afflicted by the demon, not merely that the demon stay away from Sarah.

606. Will Hudson Outdoor Survival Wikibooks [http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Outdoor\\_Survival/Food#Fish](http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Outdoor_Survival/Food#Fish) (19:06 9 November 2005).

607. Peter Garnsey, *Food and Society*, 84; Dalby, *Siren Feasts*, 61; 21-22. The eating of cattle liver is mentioned e.g. *m. Ter.* 10:11 and apparently the heart (*m. Hul.* 8:3. )

608. The heart of a *mesha* bird is recommended in Ebers 81 against a worm (Nunn, *Ancient Egyptian Medicine*, 150).

609. Nunn, *Ancient Egyptian Medicine*, 150. For instance, a woman with aching eyes is advised to eat fresh ass liver in Collier, and Quirke, *The UCL Lahun Papyri*, 58 (UC32057 (lot VI.1) Case 1, Col.1, line 5 ).

delectable in classical antiquity.<sup>610</sup> In the Book of Tobit, of course, the potential edibility of the organs is not an issue.

#### e. Leading Characteristics

As before, this somewhat disgusting account of the use of the fish's heart and liver is in the foreground. It occurs twice as part of a discourse and once as part of an actual action that follows many of the directions supplied in the two earlier statements. As noted in the discussion of the harvest of the organs, there is nothing here connected with righteousness or Jewish practice. It shares much, however, especially in the first instance, with ancient incantation bowls (see esp. Mandaean examples) against demons, which often refer both to males and females as generic victims.

#### 4. Gall (6:9; 11:4-8, 11-14)

As with the heart and liver, one reads of the gall three times. Again it is important to examine all three together carefully, for as was the case with the heart and the liver, there are some important differences among them.

#### a. The Translated Texts

##### *First Explanation of Its Use*

6:9 And [as for] the gall anoint<sup>611</sup> the eyes of a man

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610. Galen, *On the Properties of Foodstuffs* (translated by Owen Powell with an Introduction and Commentary. Forward by John Wilkins; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 138-39 provides second century C.E. evidence of the special fondness for the liver of the red mullet. Fish organs would not have been unkosher.

611. For S, ἐνχρεῖσαι, read ἐγγρησαι cf. G3 and a corrector of Vaticanus. Hanhart, *Tobit*, 185

upon which white spots have sprung up,<sup>612</sup> blow upon them, upon the white spots and they [the eyes] will be healthy.<sup>613</sup>

### *Second Explanation of Its Use*<sup>614</sup>

11:4 And the two of them went together [Raphael] said to him [Tobiah], 'Take with [your] hands the gall'<sup>615</sup> and the Lord<sup>616</sup> came along behind them. . . . 11:8 Plaster up<sup>617</sup> the gall of the fish to<sup>618</sup> his eyes and the medicine (φάρμακον) will contract<sup>619</sup> and peel the white spots from his eyes and your father will recover his sight and see the light.

### *Tobiah's Use of the Gall*<sup>620</sup>

111, presents this reading as well

612. Lit., 'where white spots have sprung up upon them (οὐ λευκώματα ἀνέβησαν ἐπ' αὐτῶν)'.
613. 6:8 And the gall (מֶרְרָחַל) is for the anointing of [the] ey[es . . .] white spots and they will be healthy (recover). (4Q197)
614. No DSS fragments correspond to this unit.
615. 'Take with you from that gall and hold it' (Corbeiensis, Regius, Mazarine 257, Monacensis); 'Take with you from the gall of that fish' (Bible de Rosas, Alcalà); 'Take from that gall and hold [it] with you' (Bobbiensis); 'Take with you from that gall' (Sangermanensis 15); 'Take the gall of the fish in your hand' (G3).
616. G1, G3, and many OL manuscripts, including Regius, indicate that the earlier Semitic reading was probably 'dog' and that in the course of transmission κύων was mistakenly read as Lord (κύριος), whose abbreviation is kappa upsilon with an overbar.
617. Hanhart, *Tobit*, 148 emends S's reading of ἔμπλασσον (ἐμπλάσσω 'to plaster up') to ἔμπασον (ἐμπάσσω, 'to sprinkle'). It is this latter verb that is used in the *Iliad* to apply φάρμακος, e.g. II.5.401). Hanhart's emendation is also supported by 4Q200 11:11's reading 'scatter' נִפְרֹץ. Cf. also for 11:11 the reading of G3 ms 44 of ἔμπασε ἐπὶ as well as G1 προσπάσσω. The OL evidence, however, is more ambiguous, as *aspergo/aspargo* can mean 'strew' and 'spatter over' as well as 'sprinkle'.
618. No comparable preposition in Corbeiensis, Regius, Mazarine 257; present in Bobbiensis, Monacensis, Bible de Rosas, Alcalà, Sangermanensis 15.
619. All available OL manuscripts refer to the medicine 'penetrating, settling in' using the verb *insido*.
620. 11:11 [And the g]all (מֶרְרָחַל) {was} in his hand and he scattered [ . . .] to him do not be afraid, my father [ . . .] his eyes 11:12 and it smarted (חָרַיק, see comparative data in *HALOT*, 556-67; Jastrow 506, denoting incising, cutting) 11:13 [ . . .] his eyes and he saw [ . . .] (4Q200). On the use of the infinitive absolute see Mark S. Smith, "The Infinitive Absolute as Predicative Verb in Sirach and the Dead Sea Scrolls: A



11:11 And the gall of the fish [was] in his hand<sup>621</sup> and he blew<sup>622</sup> into his eyes and took hold of him and said, 'Take courage, father' and he laid the medicine upon him<sup>623</sup> [11:12] and he administered it.<sup>624</sup> 11:13 And with each of his hands he peeled [them] from the corners of his eyes.<sup>625</sup> And he [Tobit] fell upon his [Tobiah's] neck. 11:14 And he wept and said to him, 'I see<sup>626</sup> you, [my] child the light of my eyes.'

## b. Function of Food in the Unit

As mentioned above, the gall functions to reverse of the power of dung. Like the droppings, the gall is associated with food and eating. It derives from a fish that attempts to eat Tobiah and is in turn eaten by him, as a kind of 'leftover'. As an agent of healing, it is highly significant to the resolution of the plot, specifically of Tobit's blindness, the first of the two crises presented by the narrative.

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Preliminary Survey," in *Diggers at the Well: Proceedings of a Third International Symposium on the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Sirach* (ed. T. Muraoka, and J. F. Elwolde. Leiden: Brill, 2000), 256-67, esp. 264 and 266.

621. Most OL manuscripts, (save Bobbiensis) supply some verb at or near the beginning of the sentence indicating that Tobiah was *carrying* the liver in his hands (the plural of these mss does not match the singular of S and 4Q200.)
622. As noted above, both G3 and the G1 have Tobiah *sprinkle* the gall.
623. Rather than 'upon him', Corbeinsis, Regius read 'in his eyes'; Bobbiensis, Monacensis: 'in the eyes of that (former) person'; Sangermanenis 15: 'the eyes of Tobit his father' and Bible de Roda; Alcalà (11:13) lack a prepositional object.
624. ἐπέδωκεν from ἐπιδίδωμι denotes 'administer' as by a physician (*LSJ*, 630) and thus fits the context, albeit somewhat redundantly. Hanhart's suggestion (*Tobit*, 150), 'it bit' ἐπεδάκνη (from ἐπιδάκνω) makes sense in light of G1 (συνεδήχθησαν) and forms of the verb *mordeo* in some OL manuscripts (Corbeiensis, Regius, Bobbiensis, Bible de Rosas, Sangermanensis 15) see also 4Q200 קרן.
625. 'Corners of his eyes' is absent in OL (and G3).
626. The verb is in the aorist (εἶδόν) in an attempt to express simultaneous action with εἶπεν (Robert Littman, personal communication, December, 2005).

### c. Narrative Tensions and Possible Redaction

As in the case with the heart and liver, the first explanation of how the gall is to be used is general, while the latter two refer to a specific patient (Tobit).<sup>627</sup> Again, there are differences between the three instances. 6:9 speaks of simply anointing and blowing. 11:8 and 11:13 both introduce the idea of peeling; 11:8 alone refers to the medicine contracting but does not mention blowing<sup>628</sup> and 11:12 (following Hanhart, whose translation is noted below) may refer to pain. As a whole, the chapter 11 material renders the use of the gall down-to-earth and practical and less mysterious in its effects than in chapter 6.<sup>629</sup> It is important to read these differences not merely as significant in of themselves, but along with the patterns of differences that we have already observed concerning the heart and liver. In both cases the second and third instances are similar against the first instance and in both cases these latter two instances move the recipe in a different direction.

### d. Leading Characteristics

Much of what we have already said about the heart and liver is applicable here. The three accounts of the use of the gall to restore vision occur twice within discourse, once in action. Like the use of the heart and liver, moreover, the employment of the gall has nothing to do with righteousness. Nonetheless, however, we will show below that gall in particular was and

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627. As before, Nowell, 'Narrative Technique,' 100.

628. Moore, *Tobit*, 202, wonders if the blowing is intended to drive off an evil spirit or otherwise activate the ointment. Stuckenbruck, 'Problem of Magic,' 266n29, favours the latter.

629. For instance, none of the recipes in the Ebers papyrus for treating white spots in the eyes refer to contracting, peeling, or smarting.

remains an important part of traditional medicine.

### e. Background

The bitter gall bladder does not appear to be an ancient Greek dietary item; certainly not the gall bladder of the larger sacrificial animals.<sup>630</sup> In contrast, as noted above, it was very important in medicine, as Pliny notes some centuries later.<sup>631</sup> Indeed, the medical application of gall is attested down the centuries.<sup>632</sup> Even now (albeit via consumption) fish, bird, and snake gall bladders are employed in East Asia for healthy eyesight.<sup>633</sup> In ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian medical writings, gall tends to be externally applied as part of a salve for conditions comparable to that of Tobit.<sup>634</sup> Other ingredients, as indicated previously, such as salt and honey may be edible, but they function as preservatives.<sup>635</sup> As noted above, the absence of such a preservative renders Tobit's depiction of the healing somewhat idealised.

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630. Menander, *Bad-Tempered Man*, 452.

631. The gall, per Pliny, *Natural History*, was the most effective animal organ and when obtained from smaller animals, was esp. suited for eye conditions (28.40.146). Fish gall certainly aided with eye health (32.24.70), but so could the gall of an ox (24.77.125), human (28.2.7), lion (28.25.90), hyaena (28.27.94) and chameleon (28.29.117). Ironically, one animal whose gall fits Tobit's situation, applicable to spots on the eyes (as well as films) and whose liver, blood and dung are said to be helpful for more general eye conditions, is the goat (28.47.171).

632. Schumpp, *Buch Tobit*, 135-139 traces it down to the nineteenth century; cf. Kollmann, "Göttliche Offenbarung," 294-97.

633. Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, "Acute Hepatitis and Renal Failure Following Ingestion of Raw Carp Gallbladders -- Maryland and Pennsylvania 1991 and 1994," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 274 (1995), 604; Y. Deng, G. Xiao, Y. Jin, X. Luo, X. Meng J. Li, Z. Ao, J. Xiao, and L. Zhou, "Multiple Organ Dysfunction Syndrome due to Ingestion of Fish Gall Bladder," *China Medical Journal* 115 (2003), 1020-22).

634. Ebers 405; Ebers 347; BAM i 23, 1 (Von Soden, 'Fischgalle als Heilmittel', 81).

635. As already mentioned above, another non-edible popular preservative was lead sulphide (e.g. Ebers 405).

## D. Conclusion

It is very noteworthy that such an important chapter as 6 (and its echoes in Tob. 8 and 11), unlike the material we have previously examined, has nothing to do with the theme of righteousness. Its primary links to Judaism, moreover, are likely allusions to the Book of Jonah and the presence of an angel. Yet this centrepiece chapter is absolutely essential to the story. It is here that Tobiah acquires both the organs necessary to his father and future wife and the information needed to make use of said organs. Much more, however, is going on. The fish that attacks and tries to eat of Tobiah simultaneously represents the forces of death and chaos, as well as being the functional equivalent of the monster/dragon seen in both fairy tales and as a part of an individual's liminal experience passage as she or he transitions from one life phase to another. Further, Tobiah's struggle with the fish anticipates his later encounter with the demon.

We cannot over-stress the extent to which food and eating are integral to this struggle. We have noted, for instance, that the concern over being eaten by a fish or a sea monster was a very real one in antiquity and consequently could add a sense of dramatic fear to the story. We have drawn attention to the considerable way that Death and/or the Underworld have been characterised using imagery associated with consumption from the Ugaritic corpus through Israelite and Jewish writings. We have commented that although Tobit begins his defeat of the fish and all that it can represent by killing it, he truly triumphs by cooking, eating, and salting it. Cooking and salting transform the fish's body into a human food product. In turn, eating the fish is the ultimate sign that he has defeated his enemy attacker

and may symbolically be connected with his acquisition of its powerful organs. We know that there were any number of alternate ways the story could have been told so that Tobiah received the necessary fish organs that do not require the fish to be dangerous and hungry, but they were not chosen. Structurally, we also have commented on how when Tobiah eats the fish, he does to it that which it has wished to do to him. We also have noted that it is not until Tobiah has fully cooked, eaten, and salted the fish that he learns precisely of the mechanisms by which the three fish organs function as medicine. Although the fish organs are never eaten in the story, they do, as noted, derive from a fish that is eaten, and the heart and liver are certainly edible. The bad smell that they will produce according to the second and third explanations of their usage is linked to food. Indeed smoking the organs may be seen as a kind of negative sacrifice typically used to eliminate demons in the ancient near east. The gall, moreover, stands in opposition to the bird droppings, with both gall and droppings associated with food and its consumption to some degree.

Regarding matters of text-criticism, 4Q196 confirms that Sinaiticus' version of the large fish attacking Tobiah's *foot* goes back to an earlier Semitic version. Furthermore, both 4Q196 and 4Q197 make it perfectly clear that only Tobiah and not the angel eat the fish, just as is also the case in Sinaiticus. We have also commented on the very difficult restoration concerning salting the food and have tentatively suggested that the combined evidence from Sinaiticus and two independent OL traditions may indicate a different syntactical treatment of the DSS fragments.

Concerning redaction, we have first noted how smoothly the narrative moves in describing

the attack, Tobiah's defeat of his enemy, and how he cooks and eats it. In contrast when we compared the three accounts of the usage of the heart and liver on the one hand, and the gall, on the other, we have found in both cases that the first instance is markedly different from the second and the third. The first explanation of the heart and liver alone refers to the person before whom the organs must be smoked. The other two explanations seem uncomfortable with the idea that Sarah's body is somehow involved. In connection with the gall, in the second and third explanations, there appears to be a less mystical and more down-to-earth perception of how the healing takes place.

As noted, Tobiah's struggle with the fish draws upon very ancient motifs. We have also shown that the account strongly echoes the Book of Jonah. This certainly extends to vocabulary ('large fish' and 'swallow'). It is also interesting that Jonah's prayer appears to compare the belly of the fish with that of the Netherworld.

Altogether, it is critical to reiterate that this exciting, food-filled passage, so essential to the story at so many levels, goes against much of what we have been seeing in our analysis thus far. One thing, however, remains consistent: Whatever the aims or messages of a particular literary unit in the Book of Tobit, references to food and to its consumption serve to reinforce them. In the case of Tob. 6, eating and food preparation contribute to its dramatic and symbolic force (two aspects that are somewhat intertwined with each other).

## Chapter Six: Wedding-Linked Events (Tob. 7-9 and elsewhere)

### A. Introduction and General Background

We now examine a part of the story which is among the most concentrated in references related to food and its consumption. These occur in connection with the wedding of Tobiah and Sarah. Weddings are important to the study of food because feasting was part and parcel of wedding celebrations in antiquity.<sup>636</sup> Indeed, the word for 'feast/drinking party' in Hebrew and Aramaic, may post-biblically denote 'wedding' or 'wedding feast'.<sup>637</sup> Where rituals are documented, as is the case with Rabbinic Jewish writings, it appears that either the feast constituted the ceremony or that certain rituals (e.g. blessings) took place as part of the feast.<sup>638</sup> This chapter brings together four wedding associated events: a proposed wedding celebration, a post-wedding meal and a large scale wedding celebration in Ecbatana, and another wedding celebration in Nineveh.

Responsibility for the feast usually belongs to the father of the groom in Second Temple and Rabbinic Jewish sources, although this custom was by no means limited to Jews.<sup>639</sup> In writings now collected as the Hebrew Bible, however, the feast may also be arranged by the

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636. Jean Bottéro, *The Oldest Cuisine in the World: Cooking in Mesopotamia* (translated by Teresa Lavender Fagan; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 99-101; in Greece; *Odyssey* 1.223; Susan Marks, "Jewish Weddings in the Greco-Roman Period: A Reconsideration of Received Ritual" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2003), 2 and 236.

637. Jastrow, 859; CAL; whether this is also the case in Greek is less certain; γάμος may refer to the celebration but not necessarily to the banquet, *BDAG*, 188. In *Esth.* 9:22, however, it seems to refer to a feast.

638. Marks, "Jewish Weddings," 207; cf. *Tob.* 9:6 G2 and G1 (with different blessings).

639. *Matt.* 22:2 (ἐποίησεν γάμους τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ) *m. Shev.* 7:4; *m. Hal.* 2:7; *Ker.* 3:7; regarding non-Jews, see e.g. Bottéro, *The Oldest Cuisine*, 99, on Mesopotamia. This arrangement is also assumed for a non-Jewish king depicted in *Ezek. Trag.* 1:4.

groom himself<sup>640</sup> or (where impractical for the father of the groom to be present) by the father of the bride.<sup>641</sup> Raphael's comments in the first half of 6:13 (see below) about planning a party may thus be seen as a case of the angel acting *in loco parentis*.<sup>642</sup> Altogether, it is quite clear that the arrangement of the wedding feast was a matter of no small importance.

## B. Proposed Wedding Celebration (6:13)

Consequently, although the first reference to a wedding celebration occurs but briefly, nonetheless Raphael considers it worth mentioning to Tobiah even before Tobiah has met his future bride, Sarah. The wedding celebration is part of a sequence of events that the angel, speaking to Tobiah as they approach Ecbatana, promises will unfold. They will spend the night, he explains, at the household of Raguel, whose only child Sarah, is destined for Tobiah. Raphael agrees to ask Raguel for Sarah's hand in marriage on Tobiah's behalf. They will then go to Rages to pick up Tobit's money. It is after this is done and they return from Rages, they will arrange Sarah's wedding celebration

Although quickly presented as but one element of a chain of expected events, this reference to a wedding celebration is by no means simple. It is thus worth including part of the broader context of the statement about the party in the translation below. The wording that is underlined will be discussed in the Narrative Tensions and Possible Redaction section shortly afterwards.

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640. Judg. 14:12.

641. Gen. 29:22; see also *Asen.* 20:6. Gos. Thom. 64 refers to a friend making a banquet.

642. Satlow, *Jewish Marriage*, 112.



## 1. The Translated Texts

6:13 ‘Now listen to me, brother, and I will speak to her father concerning the lass tonight<sup>643</sup> so that we may take her to you as bride and when we return from Raguel we shall give (ποιήσομεν)<sup>644</sup> her wedding feast (γάμον).<sup>645</sup>

[Raphael assures Tobiah that he alone has the right to marry Sarah; anyone else will be subject to the death penalty per the Book of Moses and Raguel knows this]

And now listen to me, brother, and let us speak concerning the lass tonight and we will betroth you to her and when we return from Rages we will take her and we will lead her off with us into your house.

4Q197: You/we<sup>646</sup> will speak about this lass tonight  
; you will/ let us engage and take her as wife for you  
and let us engage her<sup>647</sup> . . . wedding feast (משתותא).  
. . . And now [. . . . .] lass tonight and let us  
engage [. . .]

643. Lit., 'this night' (τὴν νύκτα ταύτην).

644. With the exception of Reginensis, which does not attest any mention of speaking or making a party, OL manuscripts have a first person indicative plural verb here; ms 319, G3, and Vaticanus (but not Alexandrinus) have the subjunctive.

645. See *BDAG*, 188 on the idiom γ. ποιεῖν.

646. Fitzmyer, DJD 19 and 48, favours 'you,' (singular) but acknowledges that a reading of the first person plural is possible; from the photograph this reading is indeed probable, especially when compared with the first two letters of ונקמה of line 6; so also CAL and Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte*, 178; on 'engage,' see Matthew Morgenstern, "Language and Literature in the Second Temple Period," *JJS* 48 (1997), 134.

647. Most of the OL manuscripts (Corbeiensis, Regius, Bobbiensis, Bible de Rosas, Alcalá, Sangermanensis 15) have a first person plural verb of some kind; Monacensis has a 2ms imperative.

## 2. Key Terms

Before venturing further, it is good idea to clarify a number of issues involving the text and its terminology. The word attested for the planned wedding-associated event in 4Q197, מִשְׁתֹּהֶה, corresponds with γάμος in Sinaiticus.<sup>648</sup> As we have already noted in the introduction to this chapter, מִשְׁתֹּהֶה, like its Hebrew counterpart, מִשְׁתֵּה, is etymologically linked with drinking, but can refer to a feast in general and a wedding in particular.

## 3. Text-Critical Issues

This passage also has a couple of (relatively minor) text-critical problems. The first text-critical issue is fairly straightforward. In Sinaiticus, Raphael states that he and Tobiah will prepare the wedding feast ‘when we return from Raguel (Ραγουήλ)’. Although Vaticanus also shares this reading, most OL manuscripts, G3 and Alexandrinus read ‘Rages’ instead (Ράγων). In addition, a later hand has corrected Sinaiticus to ‘Rages’. As Schumpp observes, the names look very similar in Greek<sup>649</sup> and a return from Rages is in fact mentioned later in the same verse.<sup>650</sup> Thus, there is little reason to think that ‘Raguel’ is anything but an inner-Greek scribal error. In all likelihood, then a reading of Rages reflects an earlier Semitic form of Tobit.

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648. Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 213.

649. Raguel’s name is spelt with an ו not a ל in Semitic languages. Where attested in Hebrew (e.g. the Medieval ’Otsar Haqqodesh 4:20) Rages is spelt with a ל.

650. Schumpp, *Buch Tobias*, 139. This is especially the case given that the second instance appears to be an instance of repetitive resumption (see the section on Redaction, below). 319 reads επ αυτω (Hanhart, *Tobit*, 114); Weeks, “Neglected Texts,” 28 n48 comments that Hanhart’s apparatus is confusing.

The second text-critical issue is more subtle, but also more difficult to resolve. Sinaiticus uses the future indicative (ποιήσομεν) with regard to arranging the wedding, as do most OL manuscripts and Alexandrinus.<sup>651</sup> Vaticanus and G3, however, have the subjunctive (ποιήσωμεν).<sup>652</sup> As there are at least two jussives attested in 4Q197 and a verb in the subjunctive shortly before ποιήσομεν in S, it is possible that the word could have been in the jussive in an earlier Semitic form of Tobit. The difference in meaning, in any case, is slight.

#### 4. Narrative Tensions and Possible Redaction

The main problems with this verse, however, lie not in the realm of text-criticism, but with respect to redaction and narrative tensions. Despite Raphael's prediction, Tobiah and the angel do not both go to Rages. Raphael goes alone. Moreover, neither Raphael nor Tobiah help prepare a wedding feast, including the party that later takes place in Nineveh (see below on 11:19).<sup>653</sup> After Raphael refers to the marriage and wedding party and comments on how Tobiah is destined for Sarah, he then largely repeats himself.<sup>654</sup> In this second recitation, however, there is no mention of a party/wedding. Instead there is the reference to a betrothal and a procession to Tobiah's house. The repetition of words as found here often signal an addition to a text. It is beyond the scope of this study to delve too much further. We may,

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651. *Faciemus*; Alcalà has the present *facimus*; the word is absent in Reginensis.

652. Future/subjunctive interchanges are often observable among Greek manuscripts of the same text.

653. Zimmermann, *Tobit*, 83, explains that this does not occur because Tobiah swears to Raguel to stay on (8:20 G3, OL manuscripts). This accounts for why Tobiah does not go to Rages, but not why he would not arrange the celebration.

654. See underlined words in the translation above.

however, cautiously suggest that the tensions in the narrative may appear to reflect differing opinions as to the nature of the wedding ceremonies that are to unite Tobiah and Sarah. The first account describes a party at the bride's house, the second a procession to the groom's. The first version more closely resembles that found occasionally in the writings of the Hebrew Bible, as noted in the Introduction and General Background, above (and hence, may be intentionally written to echo such writings). The second version is closer to that of classical and Hellenistic antiquity, in which the celebration initiated with a procession that led the bride to the house of the bridegroom, a practice that is identified in Rabbinic sources.<sup>655</sup> We do not know, however, to what extent it had become a particularly Jewish practice at the time(s) and location(s) of Tobit's composition.

## 5. Function of Food in the Unit

Although it indeed is in tension with the narrative both in immediate and larger contexts, the discussion about planning the wedding celebration still provides a sense of realism to the story. In addition, Raphael's remarks about the party and what follows communicates confidence that Tobiah will be successful in marriage and suggests that he will not be killed by the demon (which Tobiah mentions in 6:14).

## 6. Leading Characteristics

The reference to the wedding party is not in the foreground and the food element that it could

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655. *Iliad* 19.297-298; 1 Macc. 9:37, 10:58. For Rabbinic sources, see further Michael L. Satlow, *Jewish Marriage in Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 171-173.

arguably be expected to include is not even mentioned. The event is located only within the framework of anticipatory discourse; it never comes to fruition. The tension observed in the narrative above is interesting given that the passage is not concerned with righteous behaviour. There does, however, as noted, seem to be an interest in promoting certain types of ceremonies.

### C. Wedding-Linked Meals in Ecbatana (7:9-14; 8:1, 8:19-20; 9:16)

In any case, the most significant wedding-related events in Tobit are not merely mentioned in plans; they actually take place and they explicitly involve food and drink. These are the two wedding-linked meals that take place at the home of Raguel, Edna, and Sarah in Ecbatana.

The procedure for analysis of these two wedding-linked meals will depart slightly from the way in the narrative has been treated thus far. We will first look at the references to both of the two meals together and then examine them separately, which includes breaking them down into their individual components. This is done in order to illustrate first the overall effect of the meals, including ways in which they work together, and then to provide the necessary focus upon some of the finer, yet still important, points.

One of the reasons that it is a good idea to present an overview of the meals as a whole is that one meal can be better understood in relation to another. As Mary Douglas says, 'each meal carries something of the meaning of the other meals, each meal is a structured social event which structures others in its own range.'<sup>656</sup> In literature, moreover not only do meals create

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656. Mary Douglas, "Deciphering a Meal," in Mary Douglas, *Implicit meanings: Essays in* 199

structure in relation to each other, but also in an a more absolute sense. For example, feasting is frequently the locus of major events in ancient writings and as such can have a structuring role.<sup>657</sup> In particular, in New Comedy, which was extant close to the purported time of Tobit's composition, wedding meals were used as a form of closure.<sup>658</sup> We shall see that this function is applicable to at least one of the wedding-linked meals in the Book of Tobit.

The two wedding-linked meals that occur in Ecbatana are integrally connected with the major events that take place there. The first meal results from the family's welcome of the two guests and is the setting in in which Tobiah insists that the wedding go forward without delay. The wedding, the expulsion of the demon, and the marriage's consummation follow immediately. The second meal, a fourteen day feast and an official wedding celebration, is a result of Tobiah successfully surviving the night. It also serves as a reference point for Raphael's quick journey to Rages to obtain Tobit's money from Gabael.

## 1. The Translated Texts

Food preparations get underway shortly after Tobiah and Raphael arrive at the home of Edna, Sarah and Raguel. These are followed by numerous references to food and its consumption throughout their stay.

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*Anthropology* (London : Routledge, 1975), 260.

657. As noted above, Berlin, *Esther*, xxv.

658. Dwora Gilula, "Comic Food and Food for Comedy," in *Food in Antiquity*. (J. Wilkins, D. Harvey, and M. Dobson. Forward by Alan Davidson. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995), 388. New Comedy was still taking place down to the mid-third century B.C.E.

### *Hospitable Preparation Involving the Killing of an Animal*

[7:1-8 Arrival at Ecbatana: greeting by Raguel and Edna] 7:9 And he slaughtered (ἐθύσεν) a ram from the flock (κρίον ἐκ προβάτων) and welcomed (ὑπεδέξατο)<sup>659</sup> them eagerly.

### *Getting Ready to Eat: Washing and Reclining*

7:9 And when they [had] bathed (ἐλούσαντο)<sup>660</sup> and washed (ἐνίψαντο)<sup>661</sup> and they had reclined (ἀνέπεσαν)<sup>662</sup> to eat a meal (δειπνήσαι)<sup>663</sup>

### *Raguel Presses Eating and Drinking When Tobiah Tries to Arrange Marriage*

7:9 Tobiah said to Raphael, 'Brother Azariah, speak to Raguel so that he may give me Sarah my kinswoman. 7:10 But<sup>664</sup> Raguel heard [his] speech<sup>665</sup> and said to the lad 'Eat and drink and be merry (φάγε καί πίε καὶ ἡδέως γενοῦ) tonight.

### *Raguel Presses Again After Revealing the Truth But Tobit Refuses*

[7:10-11 Raguel explains that only Tobiah has the right to marry Sarah, but he must tell him the truth, that all of Sarah's previous husbands have died] 7:11 And now, lad 'Eat and drink (φάγε καί πίε)

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659. ὑποδέχομαι is esp. connected with receiving and entertaining guests hospitably (BDAG, 1037).

660. Typically, λούω refers to the washing of the entire body as a whole (BDAG, 603; LSJ, 1062 and 1175-1176). See further below, Text-Critical Issues and Issues in Translation.

661. νίπτω (νίζω in classical Greek), usually denotes the washing of parts of the body, such as hands, feet, and (in the Old Greek to sacred Hebrew writings) face. See Text-Critical Issues and Issues in Translation.

662. ἀναπίπτω is also used to describe Tobit in 2:1.

663. Unlike ἀριστάω, which, as observed in Chapter Three, can at least sometimes refer to the main meal of the day, δειπνέω is always an unmarked term that can refer to eating any meal (BDAG, 215).

664. Καί.

665. τόν λόγον.

and the lord will act for you [pl.]<sup>666</sup> but<sup>667</sup> Tobiah said, I will neither eat nor drink here (οὐ μὴ φάγω ἐντεῦθεν οὐδὲ μὴ πίω) until you resolve the things concerning me.<sup>668</sup>

### *Eating and Drinking Commences Following the Marriage*

[7:12-13 Tobiah and Sarah are married] 7:14 After that, they began to eat and drink (φαγεῖν καὶ πείν)<sup>669</sup> [7:15-17 Raguel has Edna prepare the bedroom and bring Sarah there].

### *Eating and Drinking Finishes*

8:1 And when they had finished eating and drinking (τό φαγεῖν καὶ πείν), they wished to sleep.

### *Raguel and Edna Prepare for a Large Celebration After Tobiah is Found Alive*

[8:2-3 With heart and liver, Tobiah banishes demon; 8:4-8 Tobiah and Sarah pray, 8:9 consummate the marriage; 8:9 Raguel has slaves dig grave; 8:12-14, female slave reports that Tobiah is alive; 8:15-17 God is praised; 8:18 Raguel has slaves fill grave]

8:19 And he told [his] wife to make many loaves (ἄρτους πολλούς) and having walked to the herd (βουκόλιον), he brought two oxen (βόας) and four rams (κρίους) and he said to kill (συντελεῖν)<sup>670</sup> them and they began to prepare (παρασκευάζειν).

### *Raguel Invites Tobiah to the Elongated Wedding Celebration*

8:20 And he called Tobiah and said to him, 'for fourteen days you shall not stir from here, but in the same place you will remain eating and drinking (ἔσθων καὶ πείνων<sup>671</sup>) with me and you will gladden the tormented soul of my daughter [Raguel asks Tobiah to take half his property an return

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666. ποιήσει ἐν ὑμῖν.

667. καί.

668. Compare the meaning of the middle form of the verb in 2 Macc. 8:10.

669. S reads πείν.

670. Lit. 'to bring to an end'

671. πείνων may be normalised to πίνων (Hanhart, *Tobit*, 126).



home.]

### *Tobiah at the Table at the Wedding Celebration*

[9:1-5 Raphael, following Tobiah's instructions, is sent to retrieve Tobit's money from Tobit's relative Gabael and brings Gabael to Ecbatana] and they entered Raguel's house<sup>672</sup> and they found Tobiah reclining [at the table] (ἀνακείμενον).<sup>673</sup> He leaped up and greeted him. . .

## 2. Structural Function of Food in the Unit as a Whole

The considerable density of food-related items in this unit does not occur by chance. Irene Nowell has observed well that 'the wedding scene is surrounded by eating and drinking.'<sup>674</sup> But that is just the start of it. The two meals and affiliated references to food and its consumption form a background against which significant action occurs throughout the unit. The butchering of a ram is integrally connected with the welcome of the guests. It is immediately followed by the washing and reclining of the guests, who are ready to eat. It is in this context that Tobiah arranges his wedding. And not only that, the very way he asserts his desire to be married is by refusing to eat and drink the meal before him, despite Raguel's repeated insistence.

Once the wedding takes place, the narrative brings attention back to the meal yet again with an explicit description of its commencement (7:14). This functions as an effective form of closure to what has preceded it even as it is an opening to what is yet to come. Likewise, the

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672. τὰ Παγουήλ.

673. When referring to live persons ἀνάκειμαι always refers to reclining and is as good as saying that the person is dining (BDAG, 65).

674. Nowell, NJBC, 570.

completion of eating, again explicitly mentioned (8:1), and structurally in parallel with the initiation of eating, divides the scenes. It ends the wedding proceedings of which the meal is a part and ushers in the next critical events: the defeat of the demon and the successful consummation of the marriage.

The consummation of the marriage is linked directly with the completion of the meal, as 8:1 states, 'and when they had finished eating and drinking, they wished to sleep' (but see comments on redaction below regarding this verse). As soon as Tobiah's success becomes generally known and the now unneeded grave is filled in, more food is prepared (8:19). Tobiah is ordered to stay on for the prolonged fourteen day wedding celebration, and is specifically told to eat and drink with his father-in-law (8:20). We receive an actual account of Tobiah enjoying himself at the celebration and reclining at the table (9:6) just as Raphael returns from a rapid trip to Rages, from which he has not only collected Tobit's money, but has also brought Tobit's relative, Gabael, who was storing the money.

Another kind of structure is created by the repetition of details for the preparation of both of the food-linked events. For both events, the specific food prepared is mentioned, including the number and types of animals slaughtered and who is involved in the preparation. The first food event consists of a single ram, all prepared solely by Raguel.<sup>675</sup> The second food event is a feast including two bulls, four rams, and additional items, prepared with the help of Edna and others. One appreciates the importance and scale of the occasion precisely because one has something else to compare it with.

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675. But see Text-Critical Issues, below, for an alternate reading.

The food-events play a key structural role in yet another sense. Tobiah's delay in consuming his meal in order to bring about a happy life-cycle event (the wedding) parallels his father's delay in eating in order to bring about a sorrowful life-cycle event (preparations for a burial, chapter 2).<sup>676</sup> The wedding celebration is also a symbol of joy that undoes the marked sadness of Tobit's earlier meal. This parallel operates both across generations and geographically. Tobiah shows himself to have absorbed his father's inclinations to put more important business ahead of food, which can be seen as part of his journey into adulthood. The parallel events also tie together the homes at Nineveh and Ecbatana, just as they were tied together by Sarah and Tobit's conditions and prayers in chapters 2 and 3 and just as the two families will be united by the endogamous marriage of Tobiah and Sarah.

### 3. The 'Welcoming Meal' (7:9-14; 8:1)

Having looked at the food references as a whole in chapters 7-9, we now turn our attention to a closer analysis of the two meals. We begin with the welcoming meal. As mentioned above, this meal serves as a recurring backdrop for the successful wedding, the expulsion of the demon, and the consummation of the marriage.

#### a. The Meal as a Whole

We shall start with a discussion of the welcoming meal as a whole and then proceed to an analysis of individual units. Viewed altogether, we find that there is much to observe about

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676. Cf. Griffin, "Prayer," 171; Nowell, *NIB*, 1038.

the references to food and its consumption in the welcoming meal.

## The Translated Text

[7:1-8 Arrival at Ecbatana: greeting by Raguel and Edna] 7:9 And he slaughtered (ἐθύσεν) a ram from the flock (κρίον ἐκ προβάτων) and welcomed (ὑπεδέξατο) them eagerly. And when they [had] bathed (ἐλούσαντο) and washed (ἐνίψαντο) and they had reclined (ἀνέπεσαν) to eat a meal (δειπνήσαι) Tobiah said to Raphael, 'Brother Azariah, speak to Raguel so that he may give me Sarah my kinswoman. 7:10 But Raguel heard [his] speech and said to the lad 'Eat and drink and be merry (φάγε καί πίε καί ἡδέως γενοῦ) tonight. [7:10-11 Raguel explains that only Tobiah has the right to marry Sarah, but he must tell him the truth, that all of Sarah's previous husbands have died] 7:11 And now, lad, 'eat and drink (φάγε καί πίε) and the Lord will act for you [pl.] but<sup>677</sup> Tobiah said, I will neither eat nor drink here (οὐ μὴ φάγω ἐντεῦθεν οὐδὲ μὴ πίων) until you resolve the things concerning me. [7:12-13 Tobiah and Sarah are married] 7:14 After that, they began to eat and drink (φαγεῖν καί πιεῖν) [7:15-17 Raguel has Edna prepare the bedroom and bring Sarah there]. 8:1 And when they had finished eating and drinking (τὸ φαγεῖν καὶ πιεῖν), they wished to sleep.

## Sources

Perhaps one of the most important things to recognise when interpreting this passage is its close relationship with material that is now part of the Hebrew Bible. At a very basic level, of course, when Raguel's takes a ram from his flock in 7:9, he evokes a biblical milieu in which

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677. καί.

animals are taken from the flock or herd for a guest (as in 2 Sam. 12:4) or for other special purposes (Gen. 27:9, 38:17). Links between this passage and writings from the Hebrew Bible, especially Genesis, however, are even more explicit.

It has been observed, for instance, that the welcoming and hosting of an angel recalls Genesis 18. The parallels between this passage and the wedding celebration referred to in chapters 8 and 9 are stronger, nonetheless, and will therefore be discussed below.<sup>678</sup> In contrast, however, Tobiah's refusal to eat or drink in 7:11 clearly echoes the actions of Abraham's servant who is sent to find a wife for Isaac, as most commentators are aware. Genesis 24:32 states that Laban supplies water for the servant to wash his feet.<sup>679</sup> Genesis 24:33 reads, 'But when food was set before him, he said, 'I will not eat until I have told my tale.'<sup>680</sup> In both cases, an individual seeking a marriage arrangement (1) refuses to eat (2) when presented with a meal in the prospective bride's home (3) until he gets his way. (In addition, in Genesis 24:7 (see also 24:40) Abraham tells his servant that YHWH will 'send his angel before you,' which is echoed earlier in Tob. 5:17 and 5:22.)

Of course, the situations differ however, in that (1) Isaac's marriage arrangements are made by proxy, whilst Tobiah is acting on his own behalf; (2) food is simply presented to the servant, but Raguel explicitly urges that Tobiah eat; (3) the servant refuses only to eat, whilst

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678. Irene Nowell, "Tobit," *NIB*, 1039, nonetheless does treat this as an echo.

679. Similarly, Abraham offers water for footwashing for angels in Gen. 18:4 as does Lot in Gen. 19:2; cf. Judg. 19:21, noted also by Schumpp, *Buch Tobias*, 154.

680. וַיִּשָּׂם לִפְנָיו לֶאֱכֹל וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא אֲכַל עַד אֲסַדְבַּרְתִּי דְבָרִי.

Tobiah refuses to either eat or drink; and (4) the servant wants only to speak, whereas Tobiah wishes to have the marriage settled. Nonetheless, the similarities are sufficiently strong that it is safe to conclude they are not coincidental. Nor do the apparent allusions to Genesis stop there.<sup>681</sup> The statement in Tobit 7:14 that eating and drinking commence after the wedding parallels Genesis 24:54, 'Then he and the men with them ate and drank.' A key difference here is that due to the absence of the groom in Genesis, no wedding can take place as yet; indeed, Rebecca is not even consulted as to whether she wishes to go until after the eating and drinking take place. (24:57-8). Again, however, despite these differences, the echo is still apparent.

The strong implied link between Tobiah and the successful servant in Genesis accomplishes two things: first, it situates Tobiah within the tradition of his early ancestors, and second, it shows him behaving in a recognisably exemplary way that achieves positive results. At the same time, one finds that, for reasons of its own, the Book of Tobit heightens the drama. As noted above, Tobiah is not merely demurring from eating the food placed before him, he is explicitly defying the injunctions of his future father-in-law, a potentially risky action. Here there may be an echo of the refusal of the "man of God" in 1 Kings 13:8 to eat with King Jeroboam. This story shares three features with Tobit that are not present in the story of Abraham's servant. In 1 Kings 13:7 there is an explicit oral invitation to dine, as in Tobit; the refusal includes both eating and drinking; and it includes the phrase 'in this place (במקום הזה)' which better corresponds with the Aramaic ܩܢܐ/Greek ἐντεῦθεν than does

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681. Deselaers, *Buch Tobit*, 294-96, lists a full array of parallels, albeit using the Septuagint as his basis for Genesis. Of course, we cannot rule out a translator employing OG/LXX phraseology in a translation of Tobit.

the text of Genesis 24:33.

It has also been argued that passages from the *Odyssey* (4.48-49, 51, 55, 57-60, 65-68, 294-5, 302-5) are being deliberately echoed in the Book of Tobit on the basis of the following parallels: 1) meal occurs after bathing (using one of the same verbs (λούω) found in Sinaiticus; 2) host urges guests to eat and be glad; and 3) meal includes meat and drink; and 4) guests wish to sleep afterwards. Moreover, attention has been drawn to the fact that two important meals take place at the households of both Raguel and Menelaus.<sup>682</sup> In the end, however, this sequence of events does not sufficiently demonstrate direct dependence. Minor differences in details, such as that Tobiah and Raphael's identities are ascertained before the meal in the Book of Tobit but that of Telemachus is not until after the meal, are not the primary problem (*Odyssey* 4.60-62). Rather, the similarities proposed simply are not of the same order as those with Genesis. In particular, the *Odyssey* passage is not sufficiently 'distinctive'.<sup>683</sup> Washing, being encouraged to eat, eating, and sleeping is the sequence one would expect of travellers. In contrast, the refusal to eat of Abraham's servant in Genesis 24 disrupts that very sequence.

### Narrative Tensions and Possible Redaction

Having addressed the matter of the passage's sources, it is necessary to turn to the equally important subject of its narrative tensions. There are at least two issues of concern here. The

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682. MacDonald, "Mimesis," 24-25. MacDonald fully acknowledges the importance of Genesis as well.

683. MacDonald, "Introduction," in *Mimesis and Intertextuality*, 2.

first is Raguel's repeated insistence that Tobiah eat and drink and the second is the question as to whether the narrative refers to Sarah eating or drinking anything.

As we have already remarked with regard to 6:13, when we find two phrases that are nearly identical to each other in close proximity, it is very often an indication that something has been added to the text in between them. The repetition is a result of the desire to bring the text back to the place before the added material has been introduced. In this case, the material between Raguel's two requests to consume contains extremely significant material, with regard to a matter of ideology. It is there that Raguel states unambiguously that Tobit alone is destined for Sarah. To fully appreciate the significance of this statement, we need to briefly review other passages in the story that claim Sarah was destined for Tobiah in order to fulfil a rule about endogamous marriage.

That Tobiah and Sarah are destined for each other is in no way hinted at when Sarah's problems are first described. In fact, she is not said to be a relative of Tobiah's until chapter 6 (Sarah claims in 3:15 that she does not even possess a close relative!).<sup>684</sup> In 3:17, a reference to Tobiah marrying Sarah interrupts the flow of the narrative and does not match what Raphael later says about his mission in 12:14.<sup>685</sup> Raphael's claim (6:18) that Sarah was set aside for Tobiah before creation and Raguel's remarks to Tobiah in our passage that, as his nearest relative, he has the right to marry Sarah (7:10) are not stated earlier.<sup>686</sup> Even more problematically, why does Raguel marry his daughter seven times if he knows the men are

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684. Rabenau, *Buch Tobit*, 18.

685. Rabenau, *Buch Tobit*, 14.

686. Rabenau, *Buch Tobit*, 19, links these remarks with those of 6:18.



unsuitable, thus signing their death warrants? This makes very little sense. The position that only Tobiah may marry Sarah would also appear to transform the demon into God's agent for enforcing endogamy. This, too, places extraordinary demands upon what we can expect from the story and its theology. It is infinitely more sensible to draw the conclusion that the narrative is intent in these verses in promoting a particular type of endogamy. This is not the case, however, of preferring the 'smoother' reading that is discouraged in text-criticism or the recourse to redaction in order to 'bracket off' a difficult reading. Rather, this is a judgement based on no single occurrence, but upon an entire pattern of thought that is in strong tension with basic elements of the plot. Among the best explanations for the data as we have presented it is that it is a subsequent development, which though skillfully incorporated by means of the tool of repetitive resumption, either seems unaware or unconcerned about the tensions that it causes. Of course, it might also be possible to view this as part of a problem of a Jewish composition attempting to incorporate folklore motifs into a Jewish framework. This line of thought may be supported by observing how Raguel's statement seems to echo Genesis 29:19 in which Laban tells Jacob that it is better that Jacob marry Rachel than anyone else. Nonetheless, in either case, the tensions present must be acknowledged.

Redactional activity may also be discernible in the complex sequence of events from the time Tobiah and Sarah are married to the point at which they consummate the marriage (7:11-8:9). The full extent of the problems the passages poses is beyond the scope of this study, but suffice to say, if this passage is read in a linear matter, it is unclear whether Sarah's food consumption is described or not. There seem to be correspondences amongst 7:14, which

initiates the eating and drinking sequence; 8:1, which completes the eating and drinking sequence and mentions the characters' desire to go to bed immediately afterwards; and 8:9, in which the characters actually go to bed. Working backwards, 8:9 speaks of how 'they went to sleep (ἐκοιμήθησαν)' immediately following Tobiah and Sarah's prayer. The verb 'to sleep' or 'to go to bed,' κοιμάω in the middle/passive, can refer to sexual intercourse, which does take place here.<sup>687</sup> This verb occurs nowhere else in the story except 8:1 and 2:9; in the latter instance, it refers to Tobit. Probably, then, 8:9 refers to Tobiah and Sarah. If one reads this verse along with the first part of 8:1, 'when they had finished eating and drinking they wanted to go to sleep,' one could construct a parallel between whoever went to sleep and whoever had finished eating and drinking. If so, then one could make the case that 8:1 does refer to Sarah and Tobiah.<sup>688</sup> If this is so, then arguably Sarah is included in the eating in 8:1 and potentially even in 7:14. A linear reading of the narrative, however, does not support the idea of Sarah eating. Although 7:14 could include her, in 7:15, Edna is told to take Sarah to the bedroom. Thus, Sarah is not with Tobiah in 8:1, and the eating mentioned in this verse cannot apply to her unless she is eating in the bedroom and wishing to go to bed at the same time. The second part of 8:1, which says that a non-specific 'they' brings Tobiah to the bedroom, reinforces this reading. These tensions in the narrative suggest redactional activity. Although the full ideological implications of such tensions are beyond the scope of this study, it appears that the specific way(s) in which Sarah and Tobiah are wed is the issue at stake.

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687. E.g. Gen. 19:32; Lev. 18:22.

688. So also reads Wills, *Jewish Novel*, 79.

## Function of Food in the Unit

Whatever position one may take about the redaction of the passage, it is quite clear that the welcoming meal heightens the dramatic events taking place during it, as is the case with chapter 2. From the beginning, the attention paid to such details such as the slaughter of the ram and the preparatory washing and reclining create a sense of expectation similar to that in Tobit 2:1. It is whilst in this anticipatory dining position that Tobiah thinks to interrupt the start of the meal in order to bring about the wedding. Raguel in turn (however his purposes may be construed) aims to bring Tobiah back to the meal that is before them. Although Raguel's double helping of encouragement to eat and drink (7:10-11) bears the marks of repetitive resumption, as discussed above (Narrative Tensions and Possible Redaction), in Sinaiticus it serves to emphasise the point yet further as an *inclusio* for Raguel's speech. If Tobiah's earlier interruption suggests urgency, his outright refusal, matching Raguel's own language of eating and drinking, leaves no room for doubt. As mentioned above, the ultimate defeat of the demon (by means of food-linked fish organs) and the simultaneous successful consummation of the marriage follow the meal. The passage thus becomes a confluence of the themes of food, sex, and death. This is reinforced by the link between food and sex that arguably takes place in 8:1; the link between food and death that takes place in 7:9-10 (see further the background on that passage); and the link between sex and death that is present as soon as we learn of Sarah's problems. Interestingly, despite the many references to it, there is no account of the meal proper: although the narrative gives an account of how the characters talk about it, delay it, begin to eat it, and finish eating it. This brings home how food serves as a narrative device in the passage.

In addition, viewed from a holistic perspective, food imagery in the passage in final form can arguably be used to analyse character, although, as noted in the introduction to this study, such a venture is not without its problems. A good example is Raguel, who, in the current formulation of the passage, seems very eager to play the role of the encouraging host, a role that is further emphasised in his later insistence that Tobiah stay for a fourteen day wedding feast (8:20).<sup>689</sup> Another example is Tobiah, whose distinctive character might be said to emerge when he refuses to eat until the marriage is arranged, as sketched out by Nowell.<sup>690</sup> Up to this point, Nowell suggests, Tobiah's character is 'undeveloped'. He takes up very little space on the page from the point at which he informs his father about his discovery of the corpse until he is asked to obtain the money Tobit previously deposited with Gabael. His inexperience and uncertainty is evident in the frequent questions he asks of his father and the angel posing as his relative, both of whom he obeys. As late as 7:9, he actually asks Raphael to ask Raguel to give him Sarah instead of asking himself, as we have already noted. In refusing to follow Raguel's repeated insistence that he eat and drink, Tobiah shows some degree of initiative for the first time.<sup>691</sup> Whether Tobiah has truly matured or is simply being impatient and stubborn, and whether these would be a concern of the narrative of this genre, food and eating are essential to the clear expression of his independent desires.<sup>692</sup>

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689. See further discussion on Raguel as host in the analysis of 8:20 below.

690. Nowell, "Narrative Technique," 138, followed by Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 232.

691. Nowell, "Narrative Technique," 137-39.

692. On Tobiah as impatient, see Albert Clamer, "Tobie traduit et commenté," in *La Sainte Bible*, (ed. L. Pirot, and A. Clamer; Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1949), 446 and Luis Arnaldich, *Tobit* (Biblia comentada 2; Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos 201; Second Edition: 1963), 827.

## Class and Gender Issues

The extended discussion above (Narrative Tensions and Possible Redaction) as to whether Sarah's consumption is part of the narrative gives rise to the more general question of where and when do women share the table with men. Unfortunately, the answer to this question is not straightforward due to the paucity of the data. For instance, little is known of the situation in classical Greece due to limited source material, although it seems women often ate separately when male guests were present.<sup>693</sup> Some (admittedly questionable) sources also suggest that even at family special occasions, diners were separated by gender.<sup>694</sup> In contrast, (fully clothed) Etruscan women and men dined and reclined together as early as the fourth century B.C.E.<sup>695</sup> This was a practice that would later be adopted by the Romans, although not all of them were pleased by this development.<sup>696</sup> To what extent women and men dined together in Hellenistic times is more difficult to ascertain, although it might seem surprising if the powerful and wealthy women of the period did not eat together with their husbands, at least for private feasts.<sup>697</sup> Investigations into Jewish practise are likewise based on slim evidence.<sup>698</sup> Probably the most relevant is Ben Sira's admonition not to sit with (κάθημαι) or

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693. Dalby, *A to Z*, 360-361.

694. Dalby, *A to Z*, 360.

695. Katherine M. D. Dunbabin, *The Roman Banquet: Images of Conviviality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003), 27.

696. Kathleen E. Corley, *Private Women, Public Meals: Social Conflict in the Synoptic Tradition* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993), 59-66.

697. Dunbabin, *Roman Banquet*, 25; 67-68.

698. Kathleen E. Corley, *Private Women, Public Meals*, 69-75 considers Passover meals in the Gemara, an archaeological analysis of Herod's fortress at Machaerus, Philo's *Therapeutae* (*Contemplative Life*), and reads 'against the grain' Philo's complaints in *Sacrifices of Abel and Cain* as well as Josephus' depiction of women in *Antiquities*.

taste something (טעם) with another man's wife or drink with her.<sup>699</sup> There are, also, indications even in the Mishnah that men and women ate together sometimes.<sup>700</sup> The custom of women being absent in the presence of male guests is attested in the Gemara, though, as was often the case in the Ancient Near East, they may be eating nearby.<sup>701</sup> Even more important than the question of commensality, however, is the issue raised already in this study during the analysis of the Shavuot meal of chapter 2. It appears that the narrative has almost no interest in the consumption habits of women (and slaves) and thus denies them a full physical presence in the world of Tobit.

### Leading Characteristics

The welcoming meal covers a wide range of food-related material. This includes meal preparation (butchering), dining customs (washing and reclining), and a great many references to consumption. These include the fact that the reclining guests are in position to start eating (action), the host (Raguel)'s repeated insistence that they eat and drink (discourse), Tobiah's refusal to eat and drink (discourse and action, what linguists might call 'performative discourse'<sup>702</sup>) and the beginning and completion of eating and drinking (action).

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699. Sir. 9:9 (MS A); noted by Corley, *Private Women, Public Meals*, 70.

700. *m. Ber.* 7:2; *m. Ketub.* 5:9; and possibly *m. Shab.* 1:3.

701. David Noy, "The Sixth Hour is the Mealtime for Scholars: Jewish Meals in the Roman World," in *Meals in a Social Context*. (I. Nielsen, and Sigismund Nielsen. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1998), 122; Moore, *Tobit*, 222.

702. J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

The butchering, washing and reclining seem to function more as background than foreground, but they play an important role in the narrative, precisely because, just as was the case with Tobit's Shavuot meal, the natural progression into the meal proper is interrupted. Raguel's and Tobiah's exchange are the centrepiece, nonetheless, especially highlighted by strong ties to Genesis 24, as noted above. The beginning and completing of the meal are less in the foreground but still occupies a significant position as demarcating scenes in the story. The beginning of the meal also brings the narrative back to the point before the interruption took place and confirms that Tobiah has got what he wants.

Aside from concerns about character per se, both Raguel and Tobiah illustrate, as was the case in chapter 2, that what a character does with food can be the key to proper behaviour. Raguel's desire to ensure the fulfilment of his guests' needs, including their need for food, exhibits the virtue of hospitality, although his behaviour is not as generous as Tobit's wish to entertain a poor stranger. Tobiah's zealous desire to consummate his marriage, which demonstrates his sense of priorities, stands as another model of proper behaviour, as does his father's delay in eating.<sup>703</sup> Neither of these actions is particularly limited to Jews. Nor, as we shall see further below, is washing. Reclining has already been discussed as a practice of the wider world in Chapter Three of this study.

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703. This zeal is seen for following God's law by e.g. Friedrich Stummer, *Das Buch Tobit, das Buch Judit, das Buch Ester, Baruch*. (Wurzburg: Echter, 1950), 22 and Griffin "Prayer," 171. Technically neither of what Tobit and Tobiah do is commanded in the Torah proper but see also Philo, *Hypothetica* 7:6 for a broader understanding of the law as including unwritten customs such as burial of the dead, for instance. Mention of the 'book of Moses' (7:12) recalls the earlier reference to the 'law of Moses' (1:8).

From a socio-economic standpoint, that Raguel has his own flock with a ram to spare suggests wealth, a notion that is confirmed later on in the story (Tob. 10:10). Reclining, as noted previously, also locates the guests as upper-class males. It is interesting that in this instance, Raguel alone is explicitly involved in the preparations.

b. Detailed Analysis

We now turn to a treatment of the individual elements of the unit, conveniently divided into the following components: (1) the meal's preparation, (2) the guests' getting ready to eat, (3) Raguel's first insistence that Tobiah eat and drink, (4) Raguel's second insistence that Tobiah eat and drink and Tobiah's refusal, (5) the start of the meal, and (6) the completion of the meal.

(1) Preparation: Animal Slaughter (7:9)

The first reference to the welcoming meal is an account of Raguel's killing of a ram. There is much of interest here. Not only are there a number of text-critical issues, but the subject of meat-eating is not without significance on several levels.

The Translated Text

Sinaiticus:

7:9 And he slaughtered (ἐθύσεν) a ram from the flock (κρίον ἐκ προβάτων) and welcomed (ὑπεδέξατο) them eagerly.

4Q197 :



7:9 He slaugh[tered] (<sup>704</sup>[ח]טב) a ram  
(דכר די ען)<sup>705</sup>

## Text Critical Issues<sup>706</sup>

For such a short passage, there are a considerable number of difficulties with the text. To begin with, in Sinaiticus, the account of Raguel first slaughtering the ram and then eagerly welcoming the guests in Sinaiticus seems to occur in reverse of the expected order although Sinaiticus already narrated the welcoming greetings in 7:1.<sup>707</sup> G3 and G1 provide more logical accounts:

G3

7:9 And he welcomed (ὑπεδέξατο) them eagerly  
and they slaughtered (ἔθυσαν) a ram (κρίον).

G1

7:8 And they welcomed (ὑπεδέξαντο) them  
eagerly. 7:9 and they slaughtered (ἔθυσαν) a ram  
from the flock (κρίον ἐκ προβάτων)<sup>708</sup>

Nonetheless, most OL manuscripts agree with Sinaiticus on the order of events.<sup>709</sup> It is thus

704. Because the last letter(s) are missing, it is also possible reconstruct this as a plural; see further below.

705. Lit. a male of the flock; Jastrow, 308.

706. Henceforth this unit addresses instances in which either OL diverges from S, or when G3 diverges in combination with one or more other witnesses. The single exception is a reading relevant to food where G1 alone diverges significantly. This is done because most of the other differences are of secondary importance and most likely not reflecting an earlier Semitic form of the story.

707. Cf. Abraham's actions in Gen. 18:2-8.

708. The same Greek phrase is used to translate מן־הצאן איל for Ezek. 43:23 and 25; see also Lev. 5:15 and Ezra 10:19.

709. Alcalà agrees more with G1; this may be a result of direct copying. On Alcalà see further, the Introduction to this study, Chapter One.

difficult to be certain as to whether G3 and G1 reflect a reading from an earlier Semitic forms of Tobit, although it is possible.<sup>710</sup> An error may have occurred very early in a Greek form of Tobit that shared a transmission history with both Sinaiticus and the Greek *Vorlage* of the OL manuscripts. At the same time, we cannot rule out the possibility of G1 perhaps having secondarily influenced G3, given that the text-type definitely follows G1 part of the time. This is definitely a case in which DSS evidence would be very useful.

A second problem with 7:9 is that in Sinaiticus and G3, Raguel alone welcomes the guests, but in the Old Latin manuscripts and G1, the verb is in the plural.<sup>711</sup> If the readings of OL and G1 reflect earlier Semitic forms of Tobit, as they might, the plural verb would include Edna and Sarah.

A third difficulty is that in Sinaiticus, Raguel alone performs the slaughtering. The verb is plural, however, in G3, Old Latin manuscripts and G1.<sup>712</sup> As noted, the DSS evidence is such that a plural construction is possible, so a plural verb in an earlier Semitic form of Tobit is quite possible.

A fourth issue lies in a unique reading in G1. Following the slaughter of the ram, G1 reads:

7:9 And they set before [them] (παρέθηκαν) much

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710. Zimmermann, *Tobit*, 88, posits a mechanism by which a transmission error could have taken place in S.

711. OL manuscripts: *susceperunt* (Alcalà *receperunt*); G1 (7:8): ὑπεδέξαντο.

712. OL manuscripts: *occiderunt*; G3 and G1: ἔθυσαν.

*opsa* (ὄψα πλείονα).<sup>713</sup>

This reading, which parallels parts of 2:2 in G2 (ὀψάρια πλείονα) and G1 (ὄψα πολλά), is not attested in any other ancient Greek or Old Latin version. It is therefore more difficult to assume that it existed in an earlier Semitic form, although not impossible.<sup>714</sup>

## Background

To appreciate the extent of Raguel's hospitality, it is important to keep in mind that allowing for regional differences, meat was not typically eaten in great quantities either in ancient Greece or by the Jews as reported in the Mishnah.<sup>715</sup> Raising livestock for food was a poor use of the limited cultivable land available.<sup>716</sup> Wedding celebrations were one of the few occasions when the Mishnah says Rabbinic Jews ate meat.<sup>717</sup> Festivals were another such occasion.<sup>718</sup> Of the various kosher animals that were eaten in the ancient Mediterranean, sheep and goats were the most common; bovids were used primarily for plowing.<sup>719</sup> Even so, as noted above, sheep and goats were kept first for their wool/hair and secondly for cheese.<sup>720</sup> Typically, the animals that were consumed were male (e.g. the rams of Gen. 31:38 and

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713. See further, Chapter Three.

714. Zimmermann, *Tobit*, 88 favours restoring this reading.

715. Dalby, *Siren Feasts* 22; 111 *Food and Society*, 86; *Odyssey* 11.404; *m. Ketub.* 5:8 (at least for a woman).

716. Garnsey, *Food and Society*, 16-17.

717. *m. Shevu.* 7:4; *m. Ker.* 3:7. See also Matt. 22:4.

718. *m. Hul.* 5: 3-4.

719. Dalby, *Siren Feasts*, 60; Bober, *Art, Culture and Cuisine* 66; sheep are the only animals eaten in 2 Sam 17:28-29, for instance. Hence the symbolic significance of Elisha's slaughter of his oxen after hearing Elijah's call (1 Kgs. 19:21).

720. Garnsey, *Food and Society*, 16-17.

Tobit). Although the depiction of Raguel having his own flock obviously draws upon Genesis (see Sources), it is not unrealistic even in an urban context, given that cattle were sometimes kept in sheds in the courtyard.<sup>721</sup>

### Function of Meat in Light of Anthropology

We conclude our analysis of this passage with a look at the slaughter, preparation, and consumption of meat from an anthropological point of view, which can afford insight into the world of Tobit, including gender issues. Nick Fiddes has written:

Killing, cooking and eating other animals' flesh provides perhaps the ultimate authentication of human superiority over the rest of nature . . . Meat has long stood for Man's proverbial 'muscle' over the natural world.<sup>722</sup>

Confronting and at times subjugating creatures such as birds, fish, and demons is, as already noted, a central theme of Tobit. Fiddes also notes that men's function ('as hunter, controller, provider') serves as a 'medium through which men express their 'natural control, of women as well as of animals.'<sup>723</sup> This is certainly in line with Amy-Jill Levine's analysis of women as tokens of exchange in Tobit.<sup>724</sup> Tobiah's acquisition of Sarah and the acquisition of his father's money and Raguel's property are similar, with the difference that Tobiah does fall in

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721. *m. Eruv*. 8:4.

722. Nick Fiddes, *Meat*, 65. Fiddes notes further (144) that meat and sex are 'natural analogies' in that both 'perpetuate life, may be pleasurable, imply vulnerability by breaching normal bodily boundaries,' and that both have a range of extended meanings and associations.

723. Fiddes, *Meat*, 146.

724. Levine, "Diaspora as Metaphor," 117.

love with Sarah sight unseen (Tob. 6:18). Nonetheless Tobiah's pursuit of Sarah does not have any semblance of courtship as found in Genesis 34:3 or even Genesis 29:11. To say that Sarah is just another quarry may go too far, but not necessarily by much.

## (2) Getting Ready to Eat: Washing and Reclining (7:9)

The next reference to the meal is a depiction of what Tobiah and Raphael do in preparation for eating. This includes both washing and reclining. There are again some interesting text-critical matters. We also supply some background information so that the unit might be better situated within a broader context.

### The Translated Text

Sinaiticus:

7:9 And when they [had] bathed (ἐλούσαντο) and washed (ἐνίψαντο) and they had reclined (ἀνέπεσαν) to eat a meal (δειπνήσαι)

4Q197:

7:9 [ . . . ] to eat and to drink (למאכל ולמשחה)

### Text Critical Issues

There has been considerable discussion about the text above. The main issues under consideration are (1) whether the two verbs Sinaiticus uses to describe washing (ἐλούσαντο and ἐνίψαντο) reflect an earlier Semitic form of the text and if so, (2) whether they have different meanings. Sinaiticus' reading certainly appears to be unique as G3 uses only the

former and OL manuscripts that refer to washing also employ a single verb.<sup>725</sup> (G1 does not mention washing.) In this case, however, even in the absence of support from other versions, it is possible that two verbs were in fact present in an earlier Semitic form of Tobit and were simplified into one, a situation that has occurred elsewhere with another pair of verbs.<sup>726</sup> Moreover, Bernard Couroyer's oft-cited analysis used to support the view that the two verbs have the same meaning is faulty. Couroyer maintains that because the verb 'to wash' (וָרַחַץ) is translated with both Greek verbs in the Septuagint, they have no difference in meaning.<sup>727</sup>

Actually, a careful survey demonstrates that νίπτω almost always is linked with the washing of body parts and λούω is linked with washing in general.<sup>728</sup> Moreover, in addition to evidence of both verbs in *T. Levi* 9:11 and John 13:10, the first also discussed by Liliana Rosso, one should also include, as noted already, *Odyssey* 19.317-319.<sup>729</sup>

As if in support of the idea that pairs of verbs are occasionally reduced into a single verb in the transmission of the story, one finds that instead of 'to eat and drink,' as attested in an earlier Semitic form of Tobit, Sinaiticus reads 'to have a meal' (δειπνήσαι). The difference is not great, especially as eating and drinking can be understood as a kind of merismus for

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725. Corbeinsis, Regius, Bobbiensis: *lauerunt*; Alcalà, Sangermanensis 15: *loti sunt*; on the textual difficulties with Monacensis and Bible de Rosas as inner-Latin developments see Gathercole, "Tobit in Spain," 9-11.

726. See below.

727. Bernard Couroyer, "Tobie, 7:9: problème de critique textuelle," *RB* 91 (1984), 351-61, 357.

728. A survey was made using Accordance software.

729. Liliana Rosso, "Un'antica variante del libro di *Tobit* (Tob. vii, 9)," *RSO* 50 (1976), 73-89, as cited in Moore, *Tobit*, 220; in *Odyssey* 19.317-319, the verbs are present (in reverse order), one with an additional prepositional prefix and one in Epic form.

taking a meal.<sup>730</sup> Sinaiticus does, however, make use of the full phrase to refer to the meal in 7:14 and 8:1 as well in the stand-off between Raguel and Tobiah (7:10-7:11).<sup>731</sup>

## Background

It is important to view these actions within the wider context of both Classical and Hellenistic antiquity as well as among practices described in writings such as Genesis. Reclining, as observed in 2:1, is a regular dining behaviour among the Greeks and Roman worlds.<sup>732</sup> So was bathing before meals.<sup>733</sup> Although Josephus especially identifies it as an Essene practice,<sup>734</sup> he also presents it as a Roman one.<sup>735</sup> In addition to the possibility of washing the body as a whole, foot-washing would most likely be the custom of guests who arrived from a journey.<sup>736</sup> This may be seen in Genesis, particularly in Abraham's (Gen. 18:4) and Lot's (Gen. 19:2) welcome of the angels.<sup>737</sup> Ritual hand-washing is apparently a much later custom. Although it is associated with Jews in Mark 7:3 and strongly encouraged in the Babylonian Talmud, the practice as found in contemporary Judaism was yet to be fully developed.<sup>738</sup> The idea that foot-washing is understood in Tobit is even explicitly stated in one of the OL

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730. E.g. Jer. 22:15; Zech. 7:6; Prov. 23:7; Qoh. 2:24; 1 Cor. 11:22; Luke 22:30.

731. G3 and some OL manuscripts (Corbeiensis, Regius, Bible de Rosas, Alcalà, Sangermensis 15) also have eating and drinking for both 7:10 and 7:14.

732. For further comments on the practice of reclining in Tobit and among both Jews and non-Jews, see the discussion in Chapter Two. Reclining will occur a third time in 9:6.

733. E.g. *Odyssey* 6.96-7, 19.317-319; Plato, *Symposium* 174A; Xenophon, *Symposium* 1.7; Aristophanes, *Plutus*, 614. (Roman bathhouses are well attested, for instance, in the area near Hadrian's wall.)

734. *B.J.*, II.150.

735. *Ant.* 19.96 and 19.98.

736. See Text-Critical Issues and Issues in Translation.

737. See also Judg. 19:21

738. E.g. *b. Hull.* 106a; *b. Shabb.* 14b.

manuscripts.<sup>739</sup>

(3) Raguel: Eat and Drink (I) (7:9-10)

Raguel’s insistence that Tobiah, who wishes to get married, should instead eat, drink, and enjoy himself, the next reference to the welcoming meal, has raised considerable speculation among commentators. After all, the expression ‘eat, drink, and be merry’, is not without its sinister connotations.

The Translated Text

7:9 Tobiah said to Raphael, ‘Brother Azariah, speak to Raguel so that he may give me Sarah my kinswoman. 7:10 But<sup>740</sup> Raguel heard [his] speech<sup>741</sup> and said to the lad ‘Eat and drink and be merry (φάγε καί πίε καί ἡδέως γενοῦ)<sup>742</sup> tonight.

Background

Significantly, it has been suggested that Raguel makes his statement with the thought that Tobiah, like Sarah’s previous seven husbands, is doomed to death.<sup>743</sup> Such enjoyment, specifically framed as a triad of eating, drinking and taking pleasure, is linked with eventual

739. Bobbiensis: *lauerunt pedes*.  
740. Καί.  
741. τὸν λόγον.  
742. ἡδέως γενοῦ) is used in Old Greek Esth. 1:10 to translate לֵב טוֹב in connection with inebriation.  
743. Dancy, *Shorter Books*, 43 (followed by Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 230).



or even imminent death in Jewish and Christian sacred writings. 'Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die' is found in Isaiah 22:13. The phrase 'eat, drink, and be merry' also occurs without the mention of imminent death in Qohelet 8:15, but with a clear awareness of eventual demise.<sup>744</sup> Compare also Luke 12:20 where the rich man in the parable plans to eat, drink, and be merry, unaware that he is to die that night and the quotation of Isaiah in 1 Corinthians 15:32.<sup>745</sup> Clearly, the implications of this cluster of actions are reasonably well-attested. To be sure, some scholars have claimed that Raguel in this passage was merely trying to put an impatient Tobiah at ease are within the realm of the possible.<sup>746</sup> We suggest, however, that situating this statement within wider attested traditions is less problematic than making claims about character that cannot be definitely proven. This is especially the case given our observations made earlier that issues of character, however a modern reading might discern them, may not be important to writings of this genre.

### Function of Food in the Immediate Unit

Whatever interpretation we may choose to follow (and they need not be seen as mutually exclusive), Raguel's invitation to eat, drink, and enjoy is important to the story. It creates dramatic tension by effectively rejecting Tobiah's wish to get married, leads to Raguel's disclosure about 'the truth', and with the second instance of his invitation to consume, puts

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744. Sir. 14:16 (Hebrew MS A) is in the same vein; τροφή can denote food (e.g. Gen. 49:20 and Lam. 4:5); although לחם is not linked with food in the Hebrew Bible; its root may be (e.g. Isa. 55:2 and Isa. 66:2).

745. The three concepts are, however, present without mention of death in 1Esd. 9:54.

746. Moore, *Tobit*, 220; Daniel. J. Harrington, *Invitation to the Apocrypha* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 19.

Tobiah in the spotlight, setting up his all-important refusal. In addition, Raguel's words as a host add both a realistic and literary element; hosts are expected to encourage their guests to eat.

(4) Raguel: Eat and Drink (II) and Tobiah's Refusal (7:11)

The meal continues to be the focus of the conversation in this next reference. Tobiah's refusal to eat as Raguel bids him a second time is especially significant. Although Tobiah's action clearly echoes one or more scenes from the Hebrew Bible (see Sources, above), it should also be analysed for how it functions within the narrative of the Book of Tobit.

The Translated Text

Sinaiticus

7:11 And now, lad, 'eat and drink (φάγε καί πίε) and the Lord will act for you [pl.] but Tobiah said, I will neither eat nor drink here (οὐ μὴ φάγω ἐντεῦθεν οὐδὲ μὴ πίω) until you resolve the things concerning me.

4Q199

7:11And [To]biah (טוביה) [ . . . ] 'I shall not eat (אכול)<sup>747</sup> here and [I shall] n[ot] ([ . . . ]ול)

Text-Critical Issues

Before addressing the significance of Tobiah's food refusal further, however, it would be

747. See analysis of 11:11 in Chapter Five for bibliography on the infinitive absolute in the Book of Tobit.

good to first clarify some text-critical matters. First of all, with its *waw* and *lamedh*, 4Q199 's clearly indicates that there is a second 'no' which evidently is followed by a verb referring to Tobiah's drinking. This confirms that Sinaiticus' wording, οὐ μὴ φάγω ἐντεῦθεν οὐδὲ μὴ πίω, not attested in the other two Greek versions,<sup>748</sup> does, on the basis of the evidence of 4Q199 reflect an earlier Semitic form of Tobit. Second, and more problematically, Raguel's assurance that the Lord will act for Tobiah and Sarah is not present either in G3 and there is no mention of a deity in the OL manuscripts, with the exception of Alcalà.<sup>749</sup> In the absence of further information, it is theoretically possible that this reason might not be present in earlier Semitic forms of Tobit.

### Narrative Tensions and Possible Redaction

Whatever the case may be, the assurance that the Lord will intervene is in tension with other parts of the overall passage, not merely the idea that Raguel's words about enjoyment may expect Tobiah to die, but also his subsequent pre-emptive grave-digging arrangements (8:9). Without attempting to resolve the matter, we need to stress, at the very least, that any interpretation of the passage that is based solely upon a holistic reading will present difficulties.

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748. OL manuscripts, that keep 'here' include Regius, Corbeinsis, Bobbiensis, and Bible de Rosas, but position it at the beginning of Tobiah's statement, where it is less awkward.

749. Alcalà has 'God' rather than 'Lord'.

## Background

One final way to appreciate the significance of Tobiah's action is to view it briefly within the context of food refusal elsewhere in history. The refusal to eat is often an extreme action of the very last resort in which there is an extreme power differential between those refusing and those in charge. Such hunger strikes, for political purposes, are known to have occurred in Roman times.<sup>750</sup> Gandhi, the inhabitants of the Maze prison in Belfast, and even Saddam Hussein are famous recent examples.<sup>751</sup> In addition, the highly complex 'holy fasting' phenomenon attested among women, may at times involve related issues of power and control.<sup>752</sup>

## Function of Food in the Immediate Unit

Although Tobiah's plight is hardly to be compared with that of a long-term hunger striker, such as described above, his position relative to his host and putative-father-in law is weaker in several ways. He is younger; he is a guest; and Raguel has something that he wants. One may wonder if the fact that he frames his protest using Raguel's own words says something about who is ultimately calling the shots. At the same time Tobiah's refusal to eat could be read as bordering on rudeness, either as illustrative of aggressive power or a result of

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750. Michael Peel, "Hunger Strikes," *BMJ* 315 (1997), 829-30.

751. On the power dynamics involving Irish strikers within a wider tradition originating in pre-Christian times, see George Sweeney, "Irish Hunger Strikes and the Cult of Self-Sacrifice," *Journal of Contemporary History* 28 (1993), 421-37.

752. Veronika Grimm, *From Feasting to Fasting, the Evolution of a Sin: Attitudes to Food in Late Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1996) 4, emphasises it as a means of challenging societal norms. Caroline W. Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 219-44, notes, among other factors, the importance of fasting for the 'control of circumstances'.

desperation. Such a reading cannot be proved, of course, and as we have already noted more than once, it is not certain whether such speculation about character is relevant to the genre of the Book of Tobit.

(5) Eating and Drinking Begins (7:14)

At last, after so many previous references to the meal and its consumption, the characters actually begin to partake of it.

The Translated Text

7:14 After that, they began to eat and drink (φαγεῖν  
καί πειν)<sup>753</sup>

Function of Food in the Immediate Unit

This question as to whether this meal is a wedding meal is often discussed and contradictory answers have been given. On the one hand, it is eaten after a wedding has taken place. It has been argued that this meal is kept small and secret for fear that it would end tragically.<sup>754</sup> On the other hand, the meal begins as an ordinary meal.<sup>755</sup> This raises the interesting question of whether meals in Tobit can change in function their light of new events in the plot. For if meals are integral to wedding ceremonies, then the meal described here must have something

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753. This may be normalised to πειν (Hanhart, *Tobit*, 127).

754. Moore, *Tobit*, 224.

755. Athanasius Miller and Johannes Schildenberger, *Die Bücher Tobias, Judith und Esther* (Bonn: P. Hanstein, 1940), 96; Matthias Delcor, "The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Hellenistic Period: Tobit," *Cambridge History of Judaism* 2:474.

to do with the consummation of the marriage, especially since the two events are inextricably linked in the text. At the same time, the meal is certainly no party.

(6) Eating and Drinking Finishes (8:1)

The last mention of the meal is a reference to its completion.

8:1 And when they had finished eating and drinking  
(τό φαγεῖν καί πειν) they wished to sleep.

Text Critical Issues

There is one text-critical matter that should be clarified with respect to the verse above. Whilst Sinaiticus states that ‘they’ finished eating and drinking before wishing to ‘go to sleep,’ this is expressed differently in all other ancient Greek and OL versions. G1 has the verb for ‘to eat a meal’ as a participle rather than an infinitive (δειποῦντες); all OL manuscripts refer to finishing a meal (*cenam*);<sup>756</sup> G3 even refers to celebrating rather than eating (εὐφροθυνηναί). Given that the expression ‘to eat and to drink’ is already attested above by 4Q197 for 7:9, however, it is quite likely that Sinaiticus is reflecting a Semitic *Vorlage*.<sup>757</sup>

756. Excepting Alcalà, the verb is plural for all OL manuscripts.  
757. As noted above, eating and drinking are a frequent pair in the Hebrew Bible; in Ruth 3:3 ‘finishing eating and drinking’ also precedes sexually themed behaviour.

#### 4. The Wedding Celebration in Ecbatana (8:19-20; 9:6)

We now turn to what is unambiguously a wedding feast. Although not quite as extensive as the welcoming meal, there is still a considerable amount of material connected to food and its consumption.

##### a. The Meal as a Whole

Again, we begin with an analysis of the celebration as a whole, followed by comments about the individual components.

#### The Translated Text

8:19 And he told [his] wife to make many loaves (ἄρτους πολλούς) and having walked to the herd (βουκόλιον), he brought two oxen (βόας) and four rams (κρίους) and he told [them] to kill (συντελεῖν) them and they began to prepare (παρασκευάζειν) 8:20 And he called Tobiah and said to him, 'for fourteen days you shall not stir from here, but in the same place you will remain eating and drinking (ἔσθων καὶ πεινῶν) with me and you will gladden the tormented soul of my daughter. [Raguel asks Tobiah to take half his property and return home.] [9:1-5 Raphael, following Tobiah's instructions, is sent to retrieve Tobit's money from Tobit's relative Gabael and brings him to Ecbatana] and they entered Raguel's house and they found Tobiah reclining [at the table] (ἀνακείμενον). He leaped up and greeted him. . .

## Function of Food in the Unit

Since it takes so much time, the wedding banquet is a major plot event in its own right; it delays Tobiah's return home, which contributes to the worries of his parents, especially Hannah, who wrongly concludes that her son is dead (10:1-4). Concrete depictions of food preparation and invitations to eat and drink situate the narrative squarely in the physical world, in which consumption is almost always a matter of great concern. In particular, the quick glimpse we are afforded of Tobiah reclining communicates a kind of 'slice of life', even as it implicitly illustrates the fact that the wedding celebration is still going strong. As noted above, the festive meal celebrates the reversal of potential grief (Tobiah's averted death) with joy. Thus, the wedding celebration also acts as a reversal of Tobit's sorrow, a foretaste of the eventual happy resolution of the story. One can even read the depiction of Tobiah reclining in 9:6 as parallel to the depiction of his father reclining in 2:1.<sup>758</sup>

It should also be noted that, as in the description of the previous wedding meal, there is no account of food or drink actually entering the characters' mouths or being chewed or swallowed. Instead, eating and drinking is mentioned only in Raguel's discourse, when he urges his son-in-law to remain longer.

Now we turn to consider three smaller sub-units: (1) the preparations for the feast, (2) Raguel's personal invitation to Tobiah to attend it, and (3) a brief glimpse of Tobiah enjoying himself.

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758. To be sure, the verb in Greek in 2:1 is ἀναπύπτω rather than ἀνάκειμαι; 9:6 is not attested among the DSS.



## Leading Characteristics

The wedding celebration, although glimpsed only briefly, is significant for the reasons outlined above. At the same time, however, it is not properly in what we might call in the foreground. The preparations, which we shall see, echo Genesis, are given a fair amount of attention by the extensive details with which they are recounted, as is Raguel's insistence that Tobiah stay on for fourteen days (see further, Sources on 8:20 on links to the Hebrew Bible). The portrayal of the actual party, however, is in the background.

The various food-linked references are largely connected with real-time activity, aside from Raguel's orders regarding food-preparation (although giving orders about getting food ready might qualify as an action in its own right) and Raguel's requirement that Tobiah remain and dine with him for a full fourteen days.

It is interesting that this wedding celebration, which is so closely linked with sacred Hebrew writings, both with respect to preparation and invitation, is not particularly Jewish in and of itself, aside from maintaining the tradition of (expected) week-long celebrations (as discussed above). In any event, there is no particular link to righteous behaviour here.

From a socio-economic and gender issues standpoint, we should draw attention to the phenomenon of the father-in-law and son-in-law eating and drinking together. It is not much of a stretch to see that the two individuals who share a meal together reflect the social and economic realities of marriage as a bond between the groom and the bride's father, although

bonds between Tobiah and Edna and Sarah and her father-in-law are also noted (Tob. 10:11-12).

b. Detailed Analysis

We shall now examine more closely, the preparations for the wedding party, Raguel's orders that Tobiah remain eating and drinking with him for a full two weeks, and the glimpse of Tobiah enjoying himself.

(1) Raguel and Edna Prepare for a Large Celebration (8:19)

There is much to discuss here, including comments about sources, text-criticism, as well as some background information that will place the amount of food into a broader context.

The Translated Text

Sinaiticus

8:19 And he told [his] wife to make many loaves (ἄρτους πολλούς) and having walked to the herd (βουκόλιον), he brought two oxen (βόας) and four rams (κρίους) and he told [them] to kill (συντελεῖν) them and they began to prepare (παρασκευάζειν).

4Q197

8:19 ox (𐤒𐤓) <sup>759</sup>

759. Only the tops of what may be letters 𐤒, 𐤓, and 𐤓 are visible.

## Sources

An appreciation of how this verse relates to an episode in Genesis is essential to interpretation. As one can clearly see, the preparations for the full-scale wedding banquet echo Genesis 18:6-7.

<sup>6</sup>Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, 'Quick three seahs of choice flour! Knead and make cakes!' <sup>7</sup>Then Abraham ran to the herd, took a calf, tender and choice, and gave it to a servant-boy, who hastened to prepare it.

In both cases, the husband asks the wife to make a bread product, goes to the herd, and has slave(s) (assumed but not graced with a noun or pronoun in Tobit) to prepare the animals. Yet differences also exist. For instance, the nature and number of animals are different. There are many slaves to help Raguel as opposed to the single helper for Abraham. The meal described in Tobit is a wedding banquet; the meal in Genesis is not. Moreover, haste is a factor at Mamre but not in Ecbatana. There are, however, some other ways in which Tobit and Genesis 18:6-7 connect, more so than simply equating Raguel's hospitality with that of the greatest of the patriarchs. Genesis 18 is concerned with the expectation of procreation, a subject which is explicitly mentioned by Edna in 10:12. Moreover, the term עֲדָנָה, denoting sexual pleasure, occurs only once in the Hebrew Bible, in Genesis 18:12, a link with the name Edna that in all likelihood is intentional. Last, but not least, it would be hard to find a better way than this incident to suggest the notion of angels in disguise.

It has also been suggested that this episode is meant to echo the *Odyssey* 15.92-94 and 97-98.

Specifically, the meal preparations here have been compared with when Menelaos asks his wife and servants to prepare a dinner (δειπνον).<sup>760</sup> A neighbour, Eteoneus, also helps. Unlike Genesis and Tobit, however, there, the wife is not linked to a bread product, the husband does not go to the herd (although he is linked to meat preparation), and there is a helper who is not part of the household but is instead a neighbour. At the same time, unlike Genesis, it shares the plurality of servants/slaves with Tobit. Proof of a direct dependancy in this case is far from firm.

### Text-Critical Issues

Turning now to text-critical matters, a question to consider is whether, when Raguel asks his wife to make 'many loaves' (ἄρτους πολλούς), the phrase should be understood literally or as an idiom. Possibly, given that, as noted above, the word for 'bread, loaf' in Hebrew and Aramaic can also denote food in general, this phrase could be translated as 'a lot of food.'<sup>761</sup> It has also been suggested that a Semitic לחם רב lay behind the Greek.<sup>762</sup> The phrase לחם רב occurs in Daniel 5:1, where it is translated as a large ἐστιάτορία in the Old Greek and as a large δειπνον in the so-called Theodotion. One should bear in mind, however, that there is no available DSS evidence, and the fact that the Sarah of Genesis 18:6-7 makes cakes (עוגות), a bread product in the plural (see Sources, above) is suggestive.

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760. MacDonald, "Mimesis," 25.

761. Schumpp, *Buch Tobias*, 180.

762. Zimmermann, *Book of Tobit*, 155; it could conceivably be an extension of the idea of breaking extra bread for special occasions attested in the Jerusalem Talmud, as discussed below.

## Background

Lastly we shall put what is said about the meat and the 'bread' into a broader context, keeping in mind that the narrative is strongly informed by Genesis 18. The first question to consider is whether the amount of meat would be extravagant. To be sure, it is not clear from the narrative how many guests were involved in the party. In light of Mishnaic sources that refer to the purchase of a single (likely bovine) animal for a wedding celebration of apparently seven days, however, the slaughter of two bulls for a wedding celebration double in length does not seem excessive, even with the addition of four rams.<sup>763</sup> We also have the report attributed to Nehemiah that a hundred fifty men consumed a single ox, six sheep and birds on a single day; this is not presented as luxurious living.<sup>764</sup> In modern times, it has been calculated that an average 'beef animal' yields about 500 lbs (227kg) of meat and that lambs (which obviously have less meat than rams) yield about 50 lbs or 23 kg meat.<sup>765</sup> For a fourteen day period that comes to about 64 kg of beef per day.

Unlike meat, of course, bread was a central food in antiquity, so much so, as previously noted, that 'to eat bread' is another way of saying 'to eat food' in the biblical Hebrew. According to the Jerusalem Talmud, for the non-wealthy, bread was typically baked once a week for Shabbat, and finished off during the following week; weddings were one exception.<sup>766</sup> Women are linked with the making of bread-products in Genesis and Tobit, and

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763. *m. Ker.* 3:7.

764. Neh. 5:18; Solomon's food for a day is much more, including 30 oxen (10 extra fat) and 100 sheep, but it is not clear how many this is to feed (1 Kgs. 4:22-23).

765. <http://ars.sdstate.edu/MeatSci/May99-1.htm>; kosher consumption, which eliminates the sciatic nerve, would reduce the amount still further.

766. Safrai, "Home and Family," 740, cites *y.Or. II 62b* and *y. Meg. IV:75*.

are said by the Mishnah to have at least made the dough.<sup>767</sup> At the same time, the Mishnah also refers to professional bakers and to other men who could be involved in bread making.<sup>768</sup>

(2) Raguel Invites Tobiah to the Elongated Wedding Celebration (8:20)

This passage, too, has much of interest., including text-critical matters, background information concerning how long Israelite/Jewish weddings were celebrated, sources, as well as observations about Raguel as a host and redactional concerns.

The Translated Text

8:20 And he called Tobiah and said to him, 'for fourteen days you shall not stir from here, but in the same place you will remain eating and drinking (ἔσθων καί πείνων) with me and you will gladden the tormented soul of my daughter.

Text-Critical Issues

Let us first turn our attention to two matters pertaining to the text. The first issue concerns the issue of an oath. According to 9:4 (Sinaiticus, G3, OL manuscripts, and G1), Tobiah must stay for the full fourteen days of the wedding celebration due to an oath he has said to have previously sworn. Thus, one would expect that either the oath or the act of swearing it would be mentioned beforehand. Indeed, this is the case in 8:20 according to G3, OL manuscripts and G1. It is not the case, however, in Sinaiticus. The presence of references to oaths and/or swearing in the other versions suggests that this idea goes back to an earlier Semitic form of Tobit.

767. *m. Hal.* 1:7; 2:7; 4:1. Note also that 1 Sam. 8:13 refers to female bakers.  
768. *m. Hal.* 1:7; 2:7; 3:7. Compare the 'Street of the [Male] Bakers' in Jer. 37:21.

Secondly, it is worth briefly noting that in one of the Syriac text-types (as found, e.g., in the Buchanan Bible) the wedding celebration lasts ten days, not fourteen. Fitzmyer says this is to match the ten days or so that Rebecca's mother and brother suggest that Abraham's servant stay on.<sup>769</sup> In any case, this variant is evidently a later development.

## Background

This brings us to the larger subject of the typical length of wedding celebrations and the related question of why the one here is doubled in length. Seven day celebrations, which are considered the norm elsewhere in Tobit are attested both in writings that form the current Hebrew Bible and in Rabbinic literature.<sup>770</sup> Most commentators account for the length of time for the doubled amount in by explaining that the surfeit helps emphasise the joy of the occasion, which certainly fits in with the narrative's treatment of consumption as an expression of happiness.<sup>771</sup> The fact that Raguel speaks specifically here of his daughter's happiness rather than of happiness in general is typically ignored (8:20). Raguel's wish to see his daughter longer, given that he may not ever have a chance to do so again, is also noted by scholars.<sup>772</sup> The precedent of Jacob, who had a bridal week just for Leah and presumably one for Rachel, may be serving as an inspiration, as well as his total of fourteen years of labour for Rachel.<sup>773</sup> Another factor may be the extra ten days during which Abraham's servant stays

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769. Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 251.

770. Gen. 29:27; Judg. 14:12; *m. Neg.* 3:2. A seven day wedding celebration also takes place in some versions of the Book of Tobit (see below, Tob. 11:19).

771. Schumpp, *Buch Tobias*, 180; Miller, *Tobias* 81-82; Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 251.

772. Schumpp, *Buch Tobias*, 180; Miller, *Tobias* 82; Moore, *Tobit*, 246; Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 251.

773. Gen. 29:27-28 refers to a week of seven years (cf. Dan. 9:24-27); George W. E.

with Rebecca's family (Gen. 24:55-56) which, as noted above, is picked up by one of the Syriac versions.

## Sources

In addition to the possible influence of Genesis, there are other passages to consider. In Exodus 2:20 Reuel (in Greek, Raguel), who is to become Moses' father-in-law, has Moses called for a meal. In the next verse, Moses expresses his willingness to do so and marries Reuel's daughter Zipporah. Quite likely, Tobit is echoing this incident.<sup>774</sup> One might also wish to consider Judges 19:5-8. This passage, which occurs shortly before the horrifying episode that is to follow, features a father-in-law who persistently urges his son-in-law to stay on and eat and drink with him. Whether Raguel's behaviour is intended to echo this incident cannot be proven.

It has also been suggested that there is a relationship between the passage in Tobit with *Odyssey* 4.587-91, in which Menelaus requests that Telemachus to remain with him ten or twelve days.<sup>775</sup> The difference, however, is that, unlike Tobiah, Telemachus refuses.<sup>776</sup> Also in marked contrast to Tobiah, Telemachus claims that he was so happy there that he would not wish to see his parents again. He pretends, for the sake of politeness, the only reason he wishes to leave is that his crew wishes it so. If the Book of Tobit is alluding to the *Odyssey*, it

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Nickelsburg, "Tobit, Genesis and the Odyssey", 48, seems to also suggest this; Moore, *Tobit*, 246 refers to and dismisses two other unlikely suggestions.

774. I thank Jeremy Corley for this observation.

775. *Odyssey* 4.587; MacDonald, "Mimesis," 26.

776. *Odyssey* 4.593.



is doing so in a complex way.<sup>777</sup> That is to say, it would be crafting an allusion by differing from the proposed source text. This certainly can happen in literature, but to claim that this is in fact occurring here places considerable demands upon one's credibility, considering that we have yet to have found a clear connection between the two writings thus far.

### Raguel: The Consummate Host?

The above references in the Hebrew Bible to father-in-laws eating with son-in-laws may help evaluate the view of scholars, who, employing a holistic reading strategy to the Book of Tobit have commented that Raguel is especially hospitable.<sup>778</sup> Altogether Raguel provides the means for washing, eating and drinking (including meat, a luxury), and sleeping. In and of itself this does not seem excessive. Problems of road safety, food, and secure places to spend the night meant that this level of hospitality was expected, especially from a host of the same kin and ethnicity as his or her guests.<sup>779</sup> The relevant material noted above in Genesis (24:55), Judges and the *Odyssey*, suggests that hosts (in literary texts, at least) habitually urged guests to extend their stay. When Sinaiticus is read in final form, Raguel's excessiveness lies largely in his repeated urgings that Tobiah eat and drink, (discussed with regard to the welcoming meal), when he would rather get married first as well as Raguel's invitation that he stay on for double the expected time. It is for these reasons that scholars see Raguel as obsessed with being a host.

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777. I thank Leonard Muellner for input on this passage.

778. Basili M. Girbau, *Tobit* (BM 8; Monestir de Monserrat: 1958), 67; Dumm, *JBC*, 623; Nowell, "Narrative Technique," 153; Moore, *Tobit*, 220.

779. Elizabeth Telfer, *Food for Thought: Philosophy and Food* (London: Routledge, 1996), 83; Schumpp, *Buch Tobias*, 154, and on Mesopotamian literature, Thorkild Jacobsen, "The Investiture and Anointing of Adapa in Heaven," *AJSLL* 46 (1930), 201-202.

## Narrative Tensions and Possible Redaction

It is further notable, therefore, that the reference to fourteen days, the most Jewishly linked aspect, is in tension with the surrounding narrative. Raguel's advice to Tobiah in 8:21 to return home and take half of his property at once (αὐτόθεν) seems very much like a kind of farewell. As such, it clearly does not flow logically from Raguel's invitation to Tobiah to stay for fourteen days that comes immediately afterwards.

### (3) Tobiah at the Table at the Wedding Celebration (9:6)

We come now to the final scene of the party, with a glimpse of Tobiah in dining position.

Short though it may be, it is not without interest.

## The Translated Text

9:6 [Raphael returns from a quick trip to retrieve Tobit's money from Tobit's relative Gabael, bringing Gabael as well] and they entered Raguel's house and they found Tobiah reclining [at the table] (ἀνακείμενον). He leaped up and greeted him. . .

## Class and Gender Issues

We have already pointed out how this brief depiction of Tobiah effectively calls up the experience of the party *in medias res*. Given this, it is worth commenting that the narrative does not allow any glimpses of Sarah at the wedding feast in Sinaiticus, G3, and OL manuscripts, as it does with Tobiah in 9:6. This does not mean she was not at the party, but,

at a minimum it does mean that the narrative is not interested in her presence, whether together with or separate from the males. Interestingly, she may be present in G1, where Tobiah blesses her, and in a Genizah text where she is included in a blessing as if she were present.<sup>780</sup>

D. The Wedding Celebration at Nineveh (11:19 (Not S); 12:1)

Finally, we come to the final wedding-linked event. With Tobit now cured and Sarah welcomed, a second wedding party is given in Nineveh. In this case, however, there are significantly fewer details.

1. Tobiah's Seven Day Wedding Celebration (11:19)<sup>781</sup>

Although the initial reference to the seven-day celebration is not found in Sinaiticus, there is excellent evidence from other versions.

The Translated Texts

OL manuscripts<sup>782</sup>

And the wedding celebration (*nuptiae*) of Tobiah was completed (*consummataae sunt*) with joy for seven days.

G1  
And the wedding celebration (ὁ γάμος) of Tobiah was celebrated (ἡχθη)<sup>783</sup> with joy for seven days.

780. T-S A 45.26: עם הנערה הזאת.  
781. No DSS fragments correspond to this unit.  
782. Excluding Bible de Rosas; Alcalà has a different reading but includes the same information.  
783. LSJ, 18.

## Text-Critical Issues

The combination of OL manuscripts and G1 speaks strongly for this reading. Even more convincing is the fact that 12:1 in Sinaiticus, like the other versions, speaks of the completion of such a party. Surely, one would not expect to have an account of the end of an important event without any mention of its beginning.

### 2. A Second Reference to the Wedding Celebration (12:1)

Although very brief, this food-linked passage is still worthy of some attention.

## The Translated Text

12:1 And the wedding celebration (ὁ γάμος) was ended (ἐπετελέσθη) Tobit called Tobiah his son and he said to him.

## Text-Critical Issues

We shall first clarify a minor text-critical issue. OL manuscripts read ‘After (*postquam*) the wedding feast was completed’, in contrast to Sinaiticus, which lacks any a similar conjunction. A later corrector of Sinaiticus, however, has added ‘when’ (ὅτε). G3 appears to have dealt with the matter by adding ‘and’. It seems quite likely that some conjunction could have been present in a Semitic form of Tobit.

## Function of Food in the Unit

Now a few words about the role of food. Neither food and drink nor eating and drinking are

explicitly described in this wedding the account of celebration, but this incident serves a similar function to other wedding-associated events in the narrative. Like the welcoming meal, it is used to denote (in 12:1) the transition between scenes. The party in Nineveh also continues the process of transforming grief into joy, as was begun with the major celebration in Ecbatana. Furthermore, considering that, as we have noted, wedding feasts effectively were the central part of the ceremony, the party in Nineveh, in a way, was formalising the marriage as well.

### Leading Characteristics

In contrast, however, with the party in Ecbatana, this celebration, for all of structuring role, is decidedly in the background. Next, note again, there is nothing particularly righteous about the behaviour here and the only specifically Jewish practice is the week-long length, and it is quite possible that some non-Jews also celebrate for a week. Lastly, observe that this is Tobiah's celebration, not Tobiah's and Sarah's, although it may be of relevance that it is taking place in the home of the groom and that we have seen above that often such celebrations were given by the father in honour of the son.

### E. Conclusion

The sustained references to food and eating in this unit are among the densest in the entire Book of Tobit. It is no accident that they are linked with a wedding, as in antiquity the wedding feast was the most significant part of a wedding. Wedding parties are so important that even Raphael refers to one briefly as he makes plans with Tobiah. As for what occurs in

Ecbatana, it would be impossible to tell what occurs without reference to two very important sets of meals. At the first, Tobiah is able to arrange the wedding and at the second the wedding is celebrated. So much more, however, is taking place. The first meal serves as a way of demarking transitions from one part of the story to another, from the welcoming of guests to the wedding, to the wedding's consummation and the expulsion of the demon. With details regarding preparation for both meals, a structural correspondance is created between the two, allowing one to appreciate the amount of food for the wedding celebration.

The meals' significance extends even more deeply. The various food references communicate the themes of death, struggles in power and joy. When Raguel invites Tobiah to eat and drink and enjoy himself, the question of Tobiah's death arguably looms. As Tobiah resists Raguel's invitation, we see that by adopting the technique of food refusal, Tobiah manages to get what he wants even though Raguel is in a greater position of power. When the actual wedding celebration takes place for twice the usual time, the joy that for once the groom has not died is effectively communicated. Lastly, the brief depiction of Tobiah enjoying himself at the feast is an especially effective literary means of briefly bringing the party 'to life', as well as providing a link to the acquisition of his father's money.

Among the various text-critical problems found in these chapters, we should draw attention that there is a very real possibility that, in contrast with Sinaiticus, some earlier Semitic form of Tobit referred to more than just Raguel welcoming the guests. Also, we need not assume that S's use of two verbs to refer to washing is an innovation. In addition, there is good reason to believe that Tobiah officially swore an oath to stay eating and drinking with Raguel

on the basis of versional evidence and because S does refer back to such to an oath in 9:4. Lastly and similarly, there is good reason to believe that the first mention of a wedding party at Nineveh in 11:19 was present in an earlier Semitic form of Tobit, even though it is absent in S. This is not only on the basis of good support from other versions, but based on logic as it is strange to refer to the end of a party without mention of its beginning.

On the front of narrative tensions and redaction, we have noted that Tobiah and the angel do not go to Rages as predicted. We have commented about the issue of Sarah being destined for Tobiah as being a sustained theme that is nonetheless in tension with other parts of the story and suspiciously appears in between what is a classic example of repetitive resumption (Raguel saying 'eat and drink'). We have noted that if we try to determine if Sarah in fact ate, we are confronted with a non-linear narrative. We have also noted that Raguel's invitation to Tobiah to celebrate with him for two weeks is in tension with what immediately follows, a conversation that suggests that Tobiah is about to return home immediately.

Regarding sources, the similarities between Tobiah's quest for a wife and that of Abraham's servant in Genesis 24 are self-evident, especially when both delay eating until they get their way. We have also suggested that 1 Kings 13:7 may also be behind some of the wording. There is also a very strong resemblance between Raguel and Edna's preparations for the wedding feast in 8:19 and those of Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 18. Moreover, Raguel's hospitality may be mirroring that of his counterpart in Exodus 2. In contrast, none of the references to the *Odyssey* is sufficiently distinctive to make an airtight case for the work for being a direct source at the same level as the biblical material.

From the perspective of class and gender, there is almost no interest in female consumption, thus denying women a complete existence in the story. The slaves who appear to help in the animal preparations, moreover, are not named.



## Chapter Seven: Return to Nineveh and Closure (Tob.10 -14)

### A. Introduction

With chapters 10-12 we finally reach the last five references to food and its consumption in the Book of Tobit. Interestingly, most of them concern some form of non-eating. This includes references to fasting in 10:7 and 12:8, the use of consumption as a metaphor in 12:9, an allusion to delayed eating in 12:13, and an account of an angel's total abstention from earthly food and drink in 12:19. In contrast, no mention of food or eating of any kind is present in chapters 13 and 14. The final food-linked references of chapters 10-12 bring the focus of the story back to Nineveh where the story all began.<sup>784</sup> Although Tobit is concerned about whether or not Tobiah will return, and Hannah is even more worried, he does come back and cures his father.<sup>785</sup> Raphael, after offering instruction to Tobit and Tobiah (some of which is concerned with food and eating), reveals his mission and identity and ascends to heaven. The Book of Tobit does not formally end until chapter 14, but the story is largely complete by the end of 12 (or even 11).<sup>786</sup> Tobit's prayer (13) and (second) testament (14), along with a few additional biographical details (and the defeat of Assyria) function as an epilogue.

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784. Even in scenes in which Tobiah is still in Ecbatana, he is planning his return home. On Tobit as a composition with a ring structure, see Helmut Engel, "Auf zuverlässigen Wegen und in Gerechtigkeit: Religiöses Ethos in der Diaspora nach dem Buch Tobit," in *Biblische Theologie und gesellschaftlicher Wandel: für Norbert Lohfink SJ*, (ed. G. Braulik et al. ; Freiburg im Br.: Herder, 1993), 87.

785. This cure is discussed in Chapter Five of this study.

786. As if in recognition of this, the Gaster Codex has just a single verse each to represent chapters 12 and 14 (12:22 and 14:2) and nothing in between; the Bodleian Aramaic also omits chapter 13 and reduces 12 and 14; Constantinople 1516 has no 14 and a reduced 13.

## B. Fasting

The first reference to food and its consumption in chapter 12 is found in Raphael's words about prayer and fasting (12:8). It makes sense to discuss this alongside an actual account of fasting in the narrative in 10:7. Even though these two references to fasting are absent in Sinaiticus, they are attested sufficiently in diverse witnesses to make it likely that they were present in an earlier Semitic form of Tobit (see the Text-Critical remarks, below, for both verses).<sup>787</sup>

### 1. Background

The practice of fasting has been observed across many cultures.<sup>788</sup> It is also attested within pre-exilic Israelite writings, especially in documents such as 1-2 Samuel. There, fasting may be understood as a profound expression of pain designed to bring about divine mercy by which, if possible, the situation that caused the pain may be addressed.<sup>789</sup> In post-exilic writings, fasting becomes increasingly prominent.<sup>790</sup> It is among these documents that fasting for penitential purposes begins to occur, reflecting the idea that merit can be earned from good deeds to atone for sins (cf. Tob. 4:8-10, Sir. 34:31 (no Hebrew attested), and Mart. Ascen. Isa. B 2:7-11).<sup>791</sup> Often accompanied by such actions as wearing sackcloth and

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787. Interestingly, Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 293 and 265, accepts 12:8 as referring to fasting, but states that S in the case of 10:7 is more likely to be original.

788. Rosemary Rader, "Fasting," *ER* 5:286.

789. David Lambert, "Fasting as a Penitential Rite: A Biblical Phenomenon?," *HTR* (2003), 477-512, esp. 479-480. I thank Lawrence M. Wills, for bringing this article to my attention.

790. See further John Muddiman, "Fast, Fasting," *ABD* 2: 773-76.

791. Lambert, "Fasting as a Penitential Rite," 510-12; explicitly mentioned in Pss. Sol. 3:7-8.

ashes, fasting is also especially linked with prayer in Israelite and Jewish documents.<sup>792</sup>

Prior to the destruction of the Temple,<sup>793</sup> evidence for extended regular bouts of fasting is found in examples such as Judith 8:6, which must be understood firstly in its literary context.<sup>794</sup> Later on, however, Roman writers associated fasting with Jews, and especially with Jewish women.<sup>795</sup> The fact that women were linked to this practice is logical, for as has been well studied, food and its consumption might be an area of life that women could control.<sup>796</sup> In the same vein, it may be no accident that the only unambiguous reference to female consumption in Tobit is an instance of non-eating.

## 2. Fasting I: Hannah (10:7) <sup>797</sup>

This singular reference to female consumption takes place when Hannah goes without food. She does so because she fears her son Tobiah is dead. Tobit has told her she has no reason to worry but she does not believe him. Although this instance of non-consumption is not attested in Sinaiticus, as noted above, Old Latin manuscripts, of which Regius is an example, G1, and G3 all agree that Hannah is not eating.

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792. E.g. Jer. 14:11-12; Ps. 35:13; Neh. 1:4; Ezra 8:23; Joel 1:13-14; Cowley Number 30 line 14 (A. E. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1923), 120; Sir. 34:31 (No Hebrew attested); Bar. 1:5; Luke 2:37, 5:33; Acts 13:3; cf. Lambert, "Fasting as a Penitential Rite," 491.

793. Rabbinic writings alluding to (and frequently disapproving of) ascetic food habits after the destruction of the Temple famously include *b. Bava Batra 60b*.

794. Lawrence M. Wills, personal communication, 2002.

795. For sources, see Grimm, *Feasting to Fasting*, 28.

796. Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, 219-244, as noted above.

797. No DSS fragments correspond to this unit.

## a. The Translated Texts

### Regius

And she would say, 'Be silent, do not annoy me. Do not lead me astray. My son has perished. And leaping up, she would look upon the road, which her son had gone out and she would taste nothing (*nihil gustabat*)<sup>798</sup> and when the sun had set she would go in and would mourn, weeping the entire night, not sleeping.

### G3

And Hannah said to him, 'My child has perished. And rushing out upon the road she would look upon where her son had gone out, until when the sun had set. And she would enter her house and she would not taste anything (οὐκ ἐγεύσατο οὐδενὸς) and she would not be able to sleep.

### G1

And she said to him, 'Be silent! Do not deceive me, my child has perished.' And she would go out every day into the road outside [from] which they had departed. During the days she would not eat food (ἄρτον οὐκ ἔσθιεν) and during the nights she would not cease lamenting her son Tobiah.

## b. Text-Critical Issues

As noted, each of these three largely independent witnesses clearly indicate that Hannah does not eat in this pericope. The similarity in wording between G3's 'would not taste anything (οὐκ ἐγεύσατο οὐδενὸς)' and the OL manuscripts' 'would taste nothing (*nihil gustabat*)' it notable. It suggests that a reading that speaks of tasting, rather than of not eating food, as

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798. With the exception of Alcalà (*non gustabat quicquam*) all OL manuscripts read *nihil gustabat*.

found in G1 (ἄρτον οὐκ ᾔσθιεν') may reflect an earlier, Semitic form of the Book of Tobit. The reading of Sinaiticus 'she would heed no one (οὐκ ἐπείθετο οὐδενί)' is otherwise unattested. Moreover, it resembles the reading of G3 (οὐκ ἐγέύσατο οὐδενὸς) in overall appearance. the first word of each is identical and the last word is nearly so. The middle word in each begins with the same letter and ends with the same two letter. Altogether, each phrase shares ten letters in common (ο υ κ ε τ ο ο υ δ ε ν ). Accordingly, all things considered, a scribal error on the part of Sinaiticus or at an earlier stage of transmission is likely.<sup>799</sup>

c. Function of Food in the Unit

Given this text-critical analysis, it seems reasonable to analyse the reference to fasting alongside the food-linked references actually attested in Sinaiticus. In the verses above, Hannah's fasting shows her feelings and reveals her character. Here and elsewhere in the story, Hannah is presented as a mother deeply concerned with the welfare of her son (Tob. 5:18-20, 11:5-6 and 11:9 ) The depiction of Hannah's fasting, which is part of a much larger narrative concerned with showing how anxious she is, adds drama to the story. It increases the tension as Tobiah stays on at his elongated wedding celebration in Ectabana. The account of the suffering he causes his mother demonstrates clearly that he cannot simply party for fourteen days and think there will be no consequences. Although the actions are Hannah's, the ultimate effect is to turn the focus on Tobiah and his tardiness. Structurally, Hannah's action can be viewed in the light of other refusals in the narrative, especially when Tobit does not taste anything in order to remove a body.<sup>800</sup> But unlike all other instances of food refusal

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799. Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 265, tentatively favours this position.  
800. One finds, also, the common cluster of leaping and death in the two units, in addition to

(Tobit's [twice], Tobiah's, and Raphael's), Hannah's is ultimately without justification: Tobiah is not dead. When this is read together with Tobit's confidence in the same passage (but see also Redaction/Narrative Tension, below), a conceivable reading could interpret her concern as being the result of insufficient faith. Alternatively, when read together with Hannah's remarks in chapter 5, in which she appears to claim her son's life is more important than money, a case could be made that she has a better sense of priorities than her husband.<sup>801</sup>

#### d. Class and Gender

One way to understand the effect of the narrative of Tobit in its current form regarding Hannah is to borrow a concept from the study of modern literature. This is the idea that a relatively unfavourable character serves as a voice for important, even legitimate concerns. For instance, in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, two of the least likeable characters, Mrs Bennet and Lady Catherine, are both vocal opponents of the entailment of property on the male line, a practice with serious and harmful effects to women. Whatever Austen's own views on the matter were, having an unpopular character serve as a spokesperson may paradoxically allow greater freedom in presenting a controversial viewpoint.<sup>802</sup> Here, in the Book of Tobit, the situation is not fully analogous as Hannah is a more positive character, nor does she deliver as scathing a social critique. Yet even if Hannah's behaviour is overdone and at some point acts as a foil to the supposedly more trustworthy Tobit, her words and actions do seem to genuinely present an important opinion. Thus the general assessment of

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the similar set of priorities.

801. Bow and Nickelsburg, "Patriarchy with a Twist," 137.

802. Judith Lowder Newton, "Pride and Prejudice: Power, Fantasy, and Subversion in Jane Austen," *Feminist Studies* (1978), 30.

Bow and Nickelsburg that there is more than just 'patriarchy' here at work, is significant.<sup>803</sup>

#### e. Sources

The presentation of Hannah's fasting may be potentially understood in light of sources that it may be reflecting. One source that is quite possible is 1 Samuel. Hannah's inability to eat due to grief recalls the non-eating of the weeping Hannah, mother of Samuel.<sup>804</sup> The sadness of both Hannahs is concerned with male issue. The *Odyssey* has also been proposed as a source for this passage, given that Penelope does not eat or drink out of concern for her journeying son, Telemachus.<sup>805</sup> Unlike Hannah, however, Penelope is explicitly and prominently able to sleep.<sup>806</sup> Accordingly, the motif may be too general to conclude that there is a direct dependence.

#### f. Narrative Tensions and Possible Redaction

If the passage is in fact meant to echo 1 Samuel 1:7, as our analysis suggests, it is interesting that it is in tension with other parts of the larger passage. Tobit is depicted as a worrier in 10:1-3, and Tobiah similarly believes that both his parents are worried in 10:7. But in 10:6, which belongs to the same unit as the account of Hannah's fasting, Tobit no longer has any worry and attempts to argue his wife out of her fears, fears that the narrative ultimately

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803. Bow and Nickelsburg, "Patriarchy with a Twist".

804. 1 Sam. 1:7; cf. perhaps Luke's account of Anna 2:37 (Hannah is treated as a prophet in *Tg J* to 1 Sam. 2:1-10, including with reference to Sennacherib).

805. *Odyssey* 4.787-90; MacDonald, "Mimesis," 26-27, 27n27.

806. *Odyssey* 4.793-838.

reveals are unfounded.<sup>807</sup> Although the full exploration of this problem is beyond our concerns with food, it is worth noting that Rabenau considers all three of dialogues between Tobit and Hannah to be secondary and deriving from the same layer of redaction.<sup>808</sup> We have already seen the problems involving the goat episode (Tob. 2:11-14). Furthermore, Rabenau has shown that the dialogue in chapter 5 about money (Tob. 5:18-20) shares a common tradition with *Jubilees*.<sup>809</sup> With all of these observations added together, the question of our passage's development is worth seriously considering.

#### g. Leading Characteristics

Hannah's fasting is not especially in the foreground; it is but one of several actions that illustrate her unwarranted belief that her son is dead. Moreover, it is not part of any instructory discourse, but an actual event that takes part in the story. Not only is her fasting unfounded, it is not linked in any way with righteous or proper behaviour. In a narrative marked by considerable prayers, Hannah is not even reported as praying, although Raphael (12:8) will shortly be linking the two behaviours. Although Hannah's fasting is certainly in keeping with Jewish practice, it is not in any way identified as exemplary behaviour. From a socio-economic standpoint, fasting is an act available to someone in a weakened position (see remarks on food refusal in Chapter Six of this study). This includes both women and persons of both genders who are not upper class landowners.

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807. This might support the recent view of Rabenau, *Buch Tobit*, 185 who considers all the dialogues between Hannah and Tobit to be secondary; he views them as all part of the same redactional layer.

808. See conveniently the back pages of Rabenau, *Buch Tobit*, with each of the four postulated layers in separate fonts.

809. Rabenau, *Buch Tobit*, 158-60.



### 3. Fasting II: In Raphael's Farewell Speech (12:8)<sup>810</sup>

In contrast, as we have already noted, in Raphael's speech, fasting is linked with prayer and viewed positively. Nonetheless, this is stated in a qualified manner, and in one case, fasting and prayer are regarded as inferior to almsgiving. This second reference to fasting further differs from the first in that it does not describe a particular character's behaviour, but is found within the context of instruction. As with the previous mention of non-eating, although a reading of fasting absent in Sinaiticus, it is independently attested by OL manuscripts, G3 and G1.

#### a. The Translated Texts

OL<sup>811</sup>

Prayer with fasting (*ieiunio*) is good and almsgiving with righteousness. But even better, moreover, is a little with righteousness than much with unrighteousness. It is good to perform almsgiving more than to store up a treasure of gold.

G3

Prayer with fasting (νηστείας) is good but almsgiving with righteousness is better than<sup>812</sup> both. It is better to perform almsgiving than to store up gold as a treasure.<sup>813</sup>

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810. No DSS fragments correspond to this unit.

811. So Corbeiensis, Regius; other manuscripts vary to some degree, but all include the mention of fasting and most indicate that a little with righteousness is better than a lot with unrighteousness.

812. Lit. 'above (ὑπέρ)'

813. This departs from the punctuation of Weeks, et al., *The Book of Tobit*, 288 which has a pause before 'above' and between 'almsgiving' and 'than.' Read as presented there, the

G1

Prayer is good with fasting (νηστείας) and almsgiving and righteousness. A little with righteousness is better than much with unrighteousness. It is better to perform almsgiving than to store up gold as a treasure.

## b. Text-Critical Issues

The three witnesses above again strongly suggest that their reading was present in an earlier Semitic form of Tobit. The reading of Sinaiticus, that prayer is good with truth (ἀληθείας), shares many of the same letters with the reading of νηστείας of G3 and G1, a phenomenon that we have witnessed previously. This includes both the last four letters and the letter η. The problem appears to be one of inner-Greek transmission.<sup>814</sup> It is thus reasonable to proceed to a further analysis of the three readings that mention fasting as part of this study.

Although each reading mentions fasting, they nonetheless do not all say the same thing about it. OL manuscripts and G1 state that prayer with fasting is good, as are almsgiving with righteousness. G3, however, states that almsgiving with righteousness are *better* than prayer with fasting. G3's reading is certainly the smoothest, and one that some commentators have favoured.<sup>815</sup> There is also a similar construction (a and b are x, but c is better (or more x) than both) in Proverbs 27:3, Ben Sira 40:20-25 (Hebrew MS B), esp. 40:24.<sup>816</sup> The case for

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last unit is not a complete sentence.

814. Zimmermann, *The Book of Tobit*, 109, considers the possibility of changes to 12:8 to match Mark 9:29 or of Hebrew ׀ן for ׀ן, followed by Moore, *Tobit*, 269. Zimmermann, *The Book of Tobit*, 157, further attempts to reconstruct the unit without reference to the evidence of G3.

815. Girbau, *Tobit*, 85; Clamer, *Tobie*, 463.

816. Related sentiments are also found in Prov. 16:8 and 21:3.

G3's reading would be strengthened, to be sure, if it were attested in another version.

### c. Sources

G3's reading is certainly in the spirit of Isaiah 58:6-12, in which the help of the needy is of greater importance than fasting alone.<sup>817</sup> Whatever its precise connection to ancient forms of Tobit, it is worth noting that it was previously used inter-textually in one of the medieval Jewish versions.<sup>818</sup>

### d. Function of Food in the Unit

In any case, whether one reads G1, G3, or OL manuscripts, the passage clearly illustrates of how what one does with food is a good form of righteous behaviour, so important that it forms part of instruction given by an angel. In G3, the passage refers to fasting with praying in order highlight the even more praiseworthy almsgiving. In either case, the theme of food and its consumption supports the broader aims of the chapter and of the Book of Tobit as a whole. In OL and G1, it is an example of righteous behaviour, alongside other such examples, as part of a broader discourse. In G3, it is used as a foil to a specific righteous deed that is highly commended throughout Tobit.

### e. Narrative Tensions and Possible Redaction

Notably, this strong interest in righteousness comes particularly from a Jewish perspective.

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817. See Chapter Two.

818. 'Otsar Haqqodesh. 1:16.

For this reason, Raphael's remarks about fasting are a later development, just as other references to particularly Jewish practices such as tithing and avoiding Gentile food are in tension with the rest of the narrative. Furthermore, like Tobit's declaration in chapter 1, Raphael's farewell speech in chapter 12 is full of lengthy list-like first person statements, a natural locus for later development.<sup>819</sup> Repeated mention of the contrast between a mortal king and God with respect to disclosure of deeds (12:7a; 12:11) suggests repetitive resumption, indicating that 12:7b-10 may be a subsequent outgrowth of the text. In support of this, observe that neither prayer nor fasting have anything to do with the theme concerning the disclosure of what God has done, as one would expect.

#### f. Leading Characteristics

Fasting with prayer is presented very differently than the incident in which Hannah does not eat. Here, it is not linked with the specific action of a certain character, but within the discourse of an angelic teaching. It also appears, especially in OL manuscripts and G1, to be more in the foreground. There OL manuscripts and G1 may suggest that the behaviour is more praiseworthy when combined with righteousness.<sup>820</sup> In G3, of course, although significant, the teaching operates more as a foil to almsgiving, which is considered the more pious behaviour and the only one that G3 links to righteousness. But all versions differ from Hannah's passage in that righteousness as well as prayer is an important part of the discussion. This is also seen on the broader scale in that the instruction is itself part of a

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819. As was the case in Chapters Two and Four, the full treatment of this issue is beyond the scope of the present study.

820. This depends on how one interprets the antecedent of 'a little (τό ὀλίγον)'. On related qualification, see Sir. 34:31 that states that fasting and praying is not good enough if one persists in sinning.

larger discourse concerned with proper and righteous behaviour. Furthermore, as just indicated, it is clear in this instance that, fasting with prayer is presented as a Jewish practice, although fasting, as noted above, is by no means limited to Israelites and Jews.

### C. Consumption as Metaphor (12:9)<sup>821</sup>

Raphael continues his instruction about almsgiving with a further reference to food and its consumption: feeding imagery. We now return to readings that are attested in Sinaiticus.

#### 1. The Translated Text

12:9 Those who perform almsgiving (οἱ ποιοῦντες ἐλεημοσύνην) will have their fill of life (χορτασθήσονται ζωῆς). 12:10 Those who commit sin and injustice are the enemies of their own selves (οἱ ποιοῦντες ἁμαρτίαν πολέμοι εἰσιν τῆς ἑαυτῶν ψυχῆς).

#### 2. Function of Food in the Unit

In the passage above, a metaphor involving food consumption is used to encourage almsgiving by promising a reward to those who engage in it. The primary meaning of χορτάζω denotes 'to feed'.<sup>822</sup> Its second meaning, expressing satisfaction, is an extension of the primary meaning.<sup>823</sup> As the metaphor is already inherent in the term itself, an explicit connection to food is not necessarily intended here. Also, it is entirely possible that such a

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821. No DSS fragments correspond to this unit.

822. *BDAG*, 1087.

823. G3 and G1, however, employ a verb with the primary meaning of 'to fill, fulfil', (πίμπλημι, *BDAG*, 813). The verb used in OL manuscripts and LCit Speculum §XXIV 409.21-24, *saturō*, refers to satiation with food in its first meaning (*OLD*, 1695).

connection was not present in a Semitic form of Tobit, although a verb like שבע<sup>ע</sup> also has similar connotations.

### 3. Narrative Tensions and Possible Redaction

We have also already discussed in the analysis of 12:8 how 12:7b-10 may be a later development. It is therefore worth mentioning although that verses 12:9 and 12:10 have some parallel features in terms of phrasing, there still seems to be an absence of an entirely logical flow. Both verses share in common the phrase οἱ ποιοῦντες. The idea, however, that those who sin (12:10) are their own enemies does not quite parallel the idea that those who give alms will live a full life. It seems somewhat more in direct contrast with 12:7, which speaks about doing good and not being overtaken by evil. To be sure, there is a sort of link between sin (12:10) and almsgiving (12:9b), especially as seen in 12:9 which states that almsgiving can atone for sins, but even so 12:9 and 12:10 do not flow very well.

### 4. Leading Characteristics

The reference here to having one's fill of life has a subsidiary role in stressing the main point that almsgiving is very important activity that must be performed. It occurs here as part of angelic instruction and is not linked to any particular action performed by a character in the story. This is unlike the main theme of almsgiving, which is not limited to instruction but is also part of the practices of both Tobit (1:3, 1:16, 2:14 and 14:2) and Ahiqar (14:10).

We have already seen that almsgiving, here encouraged in 12:9, is linked to righteousness in

the preceding verse (a reading found also in Sinaiticus). As before, this particular instruction is part of a larger discourse concerned with proper and righteous behaviour. Almsgiving as such is not limited to Jews, although it is certainly encouraged as a Jewish practice in Ben Sira (3:30 (MS A), 17:22 (no attested Hebrew). 29:12 (no attested Hebrew), 40:17 (MS B) and 40:24 (MS B). On the socio-economic dimensions of giving food and/or money see Chapters Two and Four.

#### D. Praise for Delayed Eating (12:13)<sup>824</sup>

As Raphael continues to address Tobit and Tobiah and debriefs them as to his identity and role on earth, he speaks favourably of Tobit's abandonment of his dinner, first described in 2:4.

##### 1. The Translated Text

12:12 And now when you and Sarah prayed I brought the record of your (pl.) prayer before the glory of the Lord and likewise when you would bury the corpses.<sup>825</sup> 12:13 And when you did not hesitate to rise and leave your dinner (ἄριστον) and go and lay out the corpse then I was sent to you to test you 12:14 and at the same time God sent me to heal you and Sarah your daughter-in-law.<sup>826</sup>

##### 2. Text-Critical Issues

There are no doubts about the text as given above in Sinaiticus. The absence of any mention

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824. No DSS material is attested for this unit.

825. Or: 'the dead.'

826. So Hanhart, whereas Sinaiticus reads: And at the same time God sent me to heal also Sarah your daughter-in-law.

of Tobit abandoning his meal in G3 may instead be accounted for other reasons. See the section on Redaction/ Narrative Tensions, below.

### 3. Function of Food in the Unit

In the passage above, as is the case in chapter 2, Tobit's delay in consumption demonstrates his capacity to perform righteous deeds. In this case the importance of the point is underscored. The praise is coming from an angel and may thus be equated with divine approval. It also occurs in an important moment in the angel's address, in which he is accounting for his descent to earth. It is particularly notable that Raphael singles out Tobit's delay in eating for special praise apart from his general praise for Tobit's burying practices. It underlines the significance of Tobit's refusal to eat yet further. After all, the angel certainly could have spoken of Tobit's haste without such detail. For instance, Raphael could have said, 'You hurried off to attend to the body without any delay,' and thus communicate Tobit's swift response. Clearly, then, Tobit's willingness to leave his meal is not just about speed, but also about priorities (see Chapter Three).

### 4. Leading Characteristics

Although Raphael's praise of Tobit's abandonment of his dinner is part of a larger series of related statements, it does appear somewhat prominently, particularly because it refers back to events already described with considerable emphasis and detail in chapter 2 of the book of Tobit. These remarks, along with the others are, like Tobit's own account, part of a discourse that looks back on past behaviour. In this case, however, the speaker comments on the deeds



of another, not his own. The larger purpose of this and the other praise is to account for Raphael's descent upon earth (see section below for the difficulties this presents.)

With regard to theme of righteousness, we have already noted that Tobit's attention to the dead, including his delay in eating his dinner is a high-profile illustration of piety. In fact, it serves to make an already pious deed (attending to the dead) even more pious. Furthermore, although burial was and is important in many cultures, Tobit's deed is particularly formulated as an Israelite/Jewish one not only because he is burying a compatriot, but because it is endorsed by a Jewish angel.

## 5. Narrative Tensions and Possible Redaction

Again, where there is a strong connection to a particularly Jewish version of a righteous mode of behaviour, there is the question of narrative tensions. We have already noted that G3 does not include the reference to Tobit abandoning his dinner. This may be the result of a scribe recognising that the passage as found is difficult to follow, possibly prompting G3 to abbreviate. There are also some serious problems about the passage in its present form. Why should Tobit's burial activities prompt Raphael to come down from heaven (unless here we have a case of the 'Grateful Dead' motif)? And where else in the story is there any evidence of Raphael testing Tobit?

If one removes

and likewise when you would bury the corpses. And when you did not hesitate to leave your dinner (ἀριστον) and go and lay out the corpse then I was sent to you to test you and at the same time

the resulting passage certainly presents a more logical reading,

And now when you and Sarah prayed I brought the record  
of your (pl.) prayer before the glory of the Lord, . . . God  
sent me to heal you and Sarah your daughter-in-law.

This reading also has the benefit of more closely matching 3:16-17, which states that both prayers came before the glory of God and Raphael was sent to heal Tobit and Sarah in response. Nothing about Tobit's activities or even the idea of testing is present there.

#### E. Angelic Abstinence 12:19

The last reference to food and its consumption in Raphael's discourse turns the attention to the eating and drinking habits of the angel himself.

##### 1. Background

Raphael's remarks about his consumption habits are best appreciated within a broader context. The question as to whether angels eat anything upon earth or in heaven does not always receive a consistent or systematically grounded answer in Israelite and Jewish traditions.<sup>827</sup> The idea that immortal beings may eat special food in their own domains is certainly ancient and is not only present in traditions such as those of Mesopotamia and

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827. *b. Yoma 75b*, for instance, shows that more than one point of view was attributed to first century rabbis like Aqiba and Ishmael. See further, David Goodman, "Do Angels Eat?," *JJS* 36/37 (1985), 160-175; Darrell D. Hannah, "The Ascension of Isaiah and Docetic Christology," *Vigiliae Christianae* 53 (1999), 165-96, esp. 172-176; Kevin Sullivan, *Wrestling with Angels: A Study of the Relationship Between Angels and Humans in Ancient Jewish Literature and the New Testament* (AGAJU 55. Leiden: Brill, 2003), 179-191.

Greece but is also implied by Genesis 3:22<sup>828</sup> The concept of special angel food is also explicit in the Old Greek and Targumic translations concerning manna in Psalm 78:25 as well in Wisdom of Solomon and Pseudo-Philo.<sup>829</sup> Whether this translates into an inability to consume earthly food is a separate issue. In Genesis, however, there is no indication that heavenly messengers are unable to eat and drink as part of their earthly missions. This includes the trio who visit Abraham and Sarah (18:8) and Lot's household (19:3). In Judges, in contrast, the angels who interact with Gideon (6:18-21) and Manoach (13:15-20) do not consume the food presented to them. For Gideon, the transformation of his food into a burnt offering is what makes him realise he has been dealing with an angel (6:22). Furthermore, the narrative explains that Manoach does not realise his visitor is an angel when he offers him food (13:16).

The idea that angels do not eat or drink became even more explicit in later times and Tobit appears to be an early attestation of the idea of angels who only pretend to eat. This motif is also attested in writings such as Philo and Josephus as well as Targumic and Rabbinic sources. In particular, these documents are at special pains to make it perfectly clear that the visitors to Abraham and Lot did not really consume, but led others to think they did.<sup>830</sup> In a number of these writings, the idea is specifically expressed in terms of false appearance.<sup>831</sup> At

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828. Adapa 60-6; *Iliad* 5.341 and *Odyssey* 5.196-199.

829. OG: ἄρτον ἀγγέλων ἔφαγεν ἄνθρωπος; *Tg-J*: מִזֶּן נֶחַח מִמְדֹּר מִלֵּאכֵיָא אִכְלוּ; Wis. 16:20: ἀγγέλων τροφήν ἐψώμισας τὸν λαόν σου καὶ ἔτοιμον ἄρτον ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ παρέσχες αὐτοῖς; *L. A. B.* 10.7 *de celo panem* and 19:5 *panem angelorum*.

830. E.g. Philo, *Abr.* 118; Josephus, *A.J.* 1.196-197; *Tg Ps-J.* and *Tg Neofiti* to Gen. 18:8; *b. B. Metzi'a* 86b; *Gen. Rab.* 48:14.

831. Philo, *Abr.* 118 (Philo states that the angels gave the appearance (φαντασία) of eating and drinking); Josephus, *A.J.* 1.197; *TgN* and *TgPs-J* to Gen. 18:8.

the same time, in some Rabbinic literature, angels were said to eat.<sup>832</sup>

One can further discern differing attitudes about angels by comparing the two recensions of the Testament of Abraham. In B, Michael is ordered to eat whenever Abraham does (4:15) without further comment. In A, however, the angel is concerned about what to do, pointing out that heavenly spirits are without bodies (ἄσώματα) and neither eat nor drink (οὔτε ἐσθίουσιν οὔτε πίνουσιν). Michael is accordingly promised a voracious spirit (πνεῦμα παμφάγον) that will do his consuming for him (4:9-10). The principle that angels do not eat may also be extended to special figures such as Moses and Enoch.<sup>833</sup> Other good humans are praised for not desiring earthly food in *1 Enoch* 108:9. The apparently immortal (and immoral) spirits of the giants in *1 Enoch* 15:11 also do not eat, although they wish to.

When we examine the Book of Tobit, we find that Raphael fits the profile of angels who pretend to eat and drink whilst on earth. Raphael's claim that he never consumed anything occurs within the broader context of his explanation of who he is and the fact that it is God, and not he, who should be praised.

2. The Translated Text

12:15 I am Raphael, one of the seven angels who stand by  
and enter before the glory of the Lord 12:16 and the two

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832. Dale C. Allison, *Testament of Abraham* (CEJL; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 143 cites *Num. Rab.* 10:5 and *Pesiq. Rab.* 25:3; see Allison 141 and 143 for further Jewish and Christian references on attitudes to angelic eating.

833. On Moses, see David Goodman, "Do Angels Eat?," *JJS* 36/37 (1985), 162-63; 2 *En.* 56:2 (I thank Christfried Bottrich for calling this passage to my attention).



out that similar constructions are found in Genesis 1:4, for example, and in the LXX translations of such passages, although the Greek here does not entirely match such constructions.<sup>836</sup> In any case, apparent discomfort with this reading may be reflected in that the wording of both G1 and G3 is different and that the three OL manuscripts typically closest to S break off after 'you were observing me' (Corbeiensis and Regius) or even 'you were observing' (Mazarine 257). That is to say, they do not seem to be able to complete the sentence.

We come now to another illustration of why it is essential to consult G1 and G3, not merely just Sinaiticus and the Old Latin. In Sinaiticus, Raphael states only that he never ate, but does not refer to drinking. Most OL manuscripts read similarly. It is clear, however, that the angel mentions drinking in 4Q196, which reads 'I did n[ot] drink (נִשְׁתֵּינָה נ[ . . . ]).' G3, G1, Monacensis, and even the Vulgate also speak of drinking.<sup>837</sup>

Lastly, we need to address one final difficulty in the wording in Raphael's statement. In this case there is unfortunately no DSS evidence. According to Sinaiticus, the vision *was appearing*, with a verb in the passive (ἐθεωρεῖτο). In OL manuscripts which refer to a vision (*uisu*),<sup>838</sup> G3, and G1, it is 'you' (plural) *were seeing* the vision (ἐθεωρεῖτε, *uidebatis*). In

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836. Paul Joüon, "Quelques hébraïsmes du Codex S de Tobie," *Bib* 4 (1923), 168-74; GKC §117h. These examples differ however from this one in that when such a construction occurs in the Hebrew Bible, the complement following ך is either an adjective or a participle, not a finite verb as the Greek presents. Other comparable passages include OG Ps. 94 (93):11 and John 9:8.

837. As noted in Chapter One, Monacensis may be secondarily dependent upon G1.

838. Bobbiensis, Monacensis, Bible de Rosas, Alcalà, Sangermanensis 15. Note that G1 earlier in 12:19 has a middle-passive form: ὠπτανόμην ('I was visible to you').

this way, 'you' (plural) is the subject of both clauses in the statement, resulting in a much smoother reading. What earlier Semitic forms of Tobit read is not certain. Smoother readings, of course, are often later developments, and the way Corbeiensis, Regius, and Mazarine 257 break off before completing the sentence, as noted above, is suspicious.

#### 4. Function of Food in the Unit

Even if we chose to reconstruct a somewhat smoother reading, it would still remain difficult to determine the precise motivation for Raphael's statement about his avoidance of earthly sustenance. Often commentators maintain that Raphael wishes to indicate that he is incorporeal and hence a true angel.<sup>839</sup> Jesus' consumption of the fish after resurrection in Luke 24:41-42, with which Jesus demonstrates that he in fact does have a body is typically invoked by way of contrast. But 12:16, in which the father and son prostrate themselves in fear after Raphael reveals his identity, makes it clear that Tobit and Tobiah never doubted his claim to be an angel. There are other objections as well.<sup>840</sup> Another possibility is that Raphael wishes to demonstrate that (unlike the angels of the *Book of Watchers*) he has adhered to the proper boundaries between heaven and earth.<sup>841</sup> This is possibly related to his avoidance of

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839. Schumpp, *Buch Tobias*, 232; Albert Clamer, "Tobie traduit et commente," in *La Sainte Bible*, (ed. L. Pirot, and A. Clamer; Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1949), 467; William George Heidt, *Angelology of the Old Testament: A Study in Biblical Theology* (CUASST Second Series. 24; Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1949), 26; Robert H. Pfeiffer, *History of New Testament Times, with an Introduction to the Apocrypha* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949), 264; Moore, *Tobit*, 272.

840. Dumm, *JBC*, 'the author feels the need to explain that a spiritual being need not eat or drink, yet to do so would be no more difficult than to speak.' 623.

841. Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 298; Fitzmyer also maintains that the ultimate purpose of Raphael disclosing his heavenly status is to make the point that wages (as Tobiah seeks to offer in 12:5) are unnecessary, because money and property, like food and drink, are not needed in heaven. This is possible, but difficult to prove definitively; equally possible is that Raphael wishes not to receive credit that is really due to God (as noted in 12:18).

women in the story.<sup>842</sup> Whatever the explanation, non-eating is treated by the narrative as something important for Raphael to stress, after having revealed that he is an angel.

## 5. Narrative Tensions and Possible Redaction

The difficulty in determining the point of Raphael's statement may be addressed by considering it within both the immediate and larger contexts of the narrative. Within 12:15-20 a call to praise God both precedes and follows the statement. This may point to repetitive resumption, which in turn suggests that the statement may be a later development. Raphael's statement may also be read in light of 6:6 (not only in Sinaiticus, but in two DSS), where it is clear from the verb that only Tobiah eats the fish. Taken at its word, the narrative at that point says nothing about any kind of pretended eating on the part of Raphael as claimed in 12:19. One might then wonder if Raphael's words are a subsequent development in the narrative. This is especially interesting in light of the reading in G1 in which a plural verb in 6:6 guarantees that the angel does in fact eat and thus achieves a consistency with 12:19. This may suggest that an interest in angelic consumption grew as the story was transmitted. That 12:19 could be a later development would fit with the fact that the theme of faked angelic eating is typically attested later than 200 B.C.E., the consensus dating of Tobit.<sup>843</sup>

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842. On Raphael's avoidance of women see Bow and Nickelsburg, "Patriarchy with a Twist," 134.

843. Cf. Rabenau, *Tobit*, 166, who places it in the latest layer of redaction in the late 2nd century B.C.E., 1888-189.



## 6. Sources

Another aspect to consider when engaging with a passage that does not flow in a linear matter is that the narrative is deliberately echoing another text and persists with those echoes at the expense of complete integration with the rest of the passage. There are certainly a number of suggestive similarities with the episode in Judges 13:2-23 concerned with the dealings of Samson's parents with an angel. Both this passage and Tobit feature the idea of an angel in disguise, prayer, angelic non-eating, prostration in fear, wonders of YHWH, and ascension.<sup>844</sup> For instance, we have seen the prostration of Tobit and Tobiah as an indicator that they accepted that Raphael was an angel. If, however, the prostration arose primarily due to an interest in echoing Judges, then our argument may conceivably be less compelling. Naturally, it is not impossible for a narrative to be consistent and exhibit intertextuality at the same time. Thus far, however, the Book of Tobit's success in this area appears to be variable, with the food refusal and meal preparations in Ecbatana at the high end and the goat episode in Nineveh at the low end.

## 7. Leading Characteristics

Raphael's eating and drinking habits are decidedly in the foreground. Not only is anything an angel says going to be important, his revelation about himself is also especially significant. From a literary standpoint such as we have been adopting through our study of the story, however, Raphael's statement best resembles that of another human: Tobit. Both Raphael and

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844. Alexander A. Di Lella, "The Book of Tobit and the Book of Judges.: An Intertextual Analysis," *Henoch* 22 (2000), 197-206; Di Lella, 'Judges' admits that not each parallel has 'equal illustrative force.'

Tobit speak of avoiding consumable substances as part of a discourse that is looking back upon past behaviour. In the case of Raphael it is earthly food and in the case of Tobit it is 'Gentile food.' In both cases the decision not to eat can be seen simultaneously as a matter of not crossing boundaries and obeying God, and possibly, as some have suggested, about identity. The single difference is that we never see Tobit avoid the food in 'real time,' whereas we know from 6:6 that Raphael did not eat, even with the problem that it does not indicate that he was faking it.

What Raphael does not do with food or drink is highly important for the theme of righteousness. By not getting entangled in earthly matters either in the forms of women or food, Raphael, unlike certain other angels we might not mention, is a model messenger of YHWH. Even if his statement about not eating is a subsequent outgrowth of the narrative, as has just been suggested, it works within the framework already found in that it views what one does or does not do with food as important to proper behaviour. In this sense, Raphael is not only in parallel with Tobit, like Tobit he serves as a model for Jewish practice for others.

From another angle, it is interesting to consider the depiction of Raphael's abstinence with the depiction of the consumption of women and slaves. In the case of both women and the angel, consumption is only depicted in the negative. If what Raphael does with food confirms that he is truly not of earth, what might it mean to apply the same logic to women and slaves? Could it also suggest that these groups of people lack, as we have already suggested, a complete physical presence in the world of the Book of Tobit? Moreover, with a nod to structuralism, how might we take the fact that not only does Raphael totally shun women but

that he is also never seen with them together in the same place? Could the two be filling in the same 'semantic slot', so to speak, thus re-enforcing the possible parallelism between them?

#### F. No Food in Chapters 13 and 14

We come at last to the end of the Book of Tobit. It is not entirely unreasonable to expect some mention of food in the final two chapters of the story. Might not Tobit joyfully anticipate himself or his descendants receiving the chance to offer up tithes again in his hymn foretelling the rebuilding of Jerusalem, or in 14:5, when he refers to the rebuilding of the Temple? The expectation that food will be mentioned might be even stronger when Tobit is described as giving alms in 14:2 and instructs Tobiah to do so in 14:8. Why doesn't he also mention the act of giving food to the hungry, as he does in chapters 1 and 4? Perhaps such actions might be understood as subsumed under almsgiving or general acts of righteousness. Part of the issue, however may come down to the differences between 13 and 14 in comparison with much of the rest of the story. For the most part, by the time we reach chapter 13, the main action of the story has already been completed. Genre considerations may also be relevant. Chapter 13 is mostly a prayer, and no other prayer in the story, especially those in chapter 3. make any reference to food. Chapter 14, although a kind of testament, is also flooded over with a whole range of eschatological predictions in fulfilment of the prophets that are simply not present in Tobit's first 'death-bed scene' of chapter 4.<sup>845</sup>

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845. Eschatological predictions are certainly a feature of some testaments (e.g. *T. Levi* 18:1-14), but it is interesting nonetheless to compare the two testaments in the Book of Tobit.

This includes as well the strong interest in Jerusalem that is, with a few exceptions, not part of the main story. Ultimately, however, none of these answers are particularly satisfactory. Tobit refers not only to almsgiving, but also to the burial of the dead. There is nothing to stop him from including a food-related instruction. The striking absence of food, so much a part of the story up until this point possibly could support those scholars who consider these chapters subsequent developments (see Chapter One, Introduction).

## G. Conclusion

As the story turns its focus back to Nineveh, we are presented with a variety of instances in which characters avoid or delay eating. These references support the wider aims of the chapters in which they are situated. In chapter 10, Hannah's fasting (10:7), which expresses her concern over her son's life, adds dramatic tension to Tobiah's overlong stay in Ecbatana and ultimately brings the focus back to Tobiah. At the same time contrasts with Tobit's assurance that Tobiah is fine.

In chapter 12, as in chapters 1 and 4, what one does with food is critical to doing good; food is again in a supporting role of illustrating how a good individual behaves. In contrast with chapters 1 and 4, however, in chapter 12 the main speaker is not a human but an angel. Revealing his identity for the first time, Raphael not only comments on the worthiness or unworthiness of certain activities linked with food and eating, but reveals information about his own consumption. Each of Raphael's remarks is connected in some way with the idea of righteous behaviour.

Raphael refers to food and eating four times as he speaks with Tobit and Tobiah in Nineveh. If G3 is to be followed, Raphael indicates that good as prayer and fasting may be, almsgiving is superior. Fasting is thus used as a foil to almsgiving, a particularly righteous activity, according to the Book of Tobit. Raphael comments further on almsgiving by indicating that those who practice it will receive their 'fill of life' using an expression that is also used for satiation by food and drink. Again food imagery is used to endorse the righteous almsgiving.

Raphael's comments on Tobit's abandonment of his dinner, which took place all the way back in chapter 2 of the story, are especially significant. Raphael highlights Tobit's righteous action by employing food imagery, when other options would have been available. He shows that what Tobit does with food has merited special divine attention and commendation not merely in terms of speed but with regard to prioritising attending to the dead over eating a nice meal. As a result, Tobit's deed is considered all the more praiseworthy.

The angel's insistence regarding his own abstinence from earthly consumption is also highly significant. It arguably demonstrates his own righteousness in his willingness not to cross the boundaries between heaven and earth. It particularly mirrors Tobit's own avoidance of 'Gentile food', which is also a boundary issue. More generally, the fact that what an angel does or does not do with food is significant could likewise serve as a message for Jews as well. This is certainly supported both by the various ways Tobit and Tobiah delay eating throughout the story, as well as the other activities involving food and its consumption. With Raphael's statement about food and eating as the final reference to the theme, in a holistic reading, it could even serve as a kind of coda, echoing for the last time the

significance of food.

Although one might make a case for expecting to see some references to food in the last two chapters of Tobit, there are not any. Genre may be of some relevance here, as the two chapters are largely prayer (13) or eschatological testament (14). Redactional activity (see below), however, may be the most relevant factor.

On the text critical front, we have demonstrated that both references to fasting (10:7 and 12:8), although absent in Sinaiticus, would most likely be present in an earlier Semitic form of Tobit. In particular, with reference to 10:7, the wording about 'tasting' of OL/G3 rather than 'eating' (G1) is more likely to be the older. Regarding prayer and fasting (12:8) we have observed that G3's reading is the smoothest, fits well-known models of comparison found in other wisdom writings, and is in the tenour of Isaiah 58:6-12. Ultimately, whether G3's reading is an earlier one or not cannot be definitively proven. With regard to 12:19, we have noted some difficulties with the text. We have also shown that Sinaiticus does not fully reflect the reading of the DSS in that Sinaiticus speaks of not eating only, whereas in 4Q196 drinking is clearly mentioned. Also of importance is how G1 differs from Sinaiticus on this issue, in light of 6:6 in that 12:19 in G1 is more consistent with the view that the angel ate in 6:6. A holistic reading might allow one to read the two verses together indicating that what 6:6 describes is the account of faked eating that Raphael speaks of 12:19. In contrast, Sinaiticus and related text types, in a holistic reading, would appear to have 6:6 represent the reality of the situation, as in Raphael did not eat, thus allowing for a vision to have taken place, a vision such as proclaimed in 12:19. Most likely, however, there is no evidence for

this kind of foresight in the narrative.

Turning to matters of redaction, we have noted that Tobit is alternatively portrayed both as worried about Tobiah and confident that all is fine. We have also seen that chapter 12 as a whole, as a list of important things spoken by an angel, is a natural environment for added material to develop. We have indicated a number of places in which repetitive resumption may be taking place as well as places in which a linear flow is difficult to fathom. In particular we have shown how Raphael's account of his descent is very problematic. This is especially the case in the section in which it is linked with particular activities other than prayer and when it is depicted as a test. We have also noted that the actual motivation behind Raphael's non-consumption cannot be derived from its immediate context. In addition, we have seen that the idea that angels fake eating upon earth is otherwise attested in literature later than the putative date assigned to the composition of the Book of Tobit. Lastly, we observe again that 13 and 14, with their interest in Jerusalem and in other matters not present in most of the story, have for centuries been considered later developments, as discussed in the introduction to this story.

Regarding sources, we have shown that 1 Samuel's depiction of Hannah, mother of Samuel is a likely source for the depiction of Hannah, mother of Tobiah in chapter 10. We have examined the account of Penelope in the *Odyssey* also fasting, but did not find it especially compelling. In contrast, we have agreed that the parallels between chapter 12 of Tobit and the story of Samson's parents and the angel in Judges to be highly suggestive.

On the theme of class and gender, we see how Hannah's non-eating is the only instance of clear female consumption in the story. We have commented on how fasting was an option of religious expression available to women and to persons on the lower social scale. In Hannah's case however, her fasting is not linked with righteousness behaviour, is not linked with prayer, and is not even founded on an accurate perception of reality. Hannah's remarks can be read subversively to indicate that she has the proper set of priorities, but this is not 'the plain meaning of the text'. Her fasting is nothing like what Raphael describes in 12:8 and if the reading of G3 were to be taken on board, Hannah would do better to give alms than go without eating.

On the question of authorial intentionality, the treatment of Hannah's fasting and Raphael's comments on his abstinence are particularly pertinent. In both cases, the precise significance of each is open to more than one interpretation. Also, both Hannah's and Raphael's actions raise important issues about redaction. Furthermore, for each there is an option of reading the behaviour in light of earlier passages in the story. In the case of Hannah, her concern for her son may be understood within the context of her doubts about the journey in chapter 5. For Raphael, the passage in chapter 6 in which he does not eat seems important. Again, for a holistic reading, the procedure we have suggested earlier in this study seems applicable here. This involves both sketching out all passages of any relevance, noting both the consistencies and the gaps or even ruptures or tensions. At the same time, any relevant background information is taken into consideration. The end result will not be a single reading but a delineation of a finite number of readings that have some kind of sound basis in the text. In such an analysis multiple readings may not merely be permitted to coexist, it may be of



necessity that they do so.

## Chapter Eight: Conclusions

[Folklorists] are inclined to say that any two stories that are built around the same folklore motive, or are made up of a generally similar combination of such motives, are 'the same stories.' . . . It is precisely the colouring, the atmosphere, the unclassifiable individual details of a story, and above all the general purport that informs with life the undissected bones of the plot, that really count.<sup>846</sup>

Food and its consumption are among the details that help distinguish Tobit from any number of stories about defeating monsters (in or out of the bedchamber), marrying a princess, and acquiring wealth. This can best be appreciated by means of a chapter-by-chapter summary of the role food plays in the Book of Tobit, by a thematic summary and by a depiction of what the story would be like if there were no mention of food in it. Following this, we present . . . further synthesis.

### A. Chapter by Chapter Summary

In chapter 1, Tobit narrates what he has done with food (tithing, avoiding Gentile food, giving food to the hungry) as evidence of his righteous behaviour. This supports the overall claim laid out in this chapter that Tobit is a righteous man.

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846. J. R. R. Tolkien, "On Fairy Tales," *The Monsters and the Critics, and Other Essays* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1983), 119-20.

In chapter 2, Tobit's festive Shavuot meal performs a variety of functions. It serves as the occasion which precipitates an unfortunate chain of events. It heightens emotions by building up anticipation only to frustrate it. The meal also adds to the drama of the story when Tobit leaps up from it to attend to the corpse. Lastly, it provides further evidence of Tobit's righteous behaviour which is expressed through his wish to entertain a guest and his attention to the dead body. In both cases, Tobit's willingness to delay eating illustrates his proper sense of priorities, and his ability to defer gratification. Food plays a role later in the chapter, too, when bird dung, a by-product of digestion, falls into Tobit's eyes and blinds him. Ahikar and Hannah both support Tobit, and according to some Old Latin manuscripts, they actually feed him. Finally, when Hannah brings home a goat as a bonus, Tobit, who does not believe her, underscores the wrongness of what he thinks is a theft by speaking of how stolen food cannot be eaten. Again, righteous behaviour is linked with what one does with food.

In chapter 4, the references to food, drink and their consumption re-enforce Tobit's instructions to his son to behave righteously, properly, and wisely. Being lazy will leave one hungry, and binge drinking is ill-advised; one should feed the hungry; and one should place a consumable substance on the graves of the righteous but not on those of the wicked. This last instruction effectively combines two themes important to the story as a whole: honouring the dead and helping the righteous but not the wicked. In chapter 5, there is a reference to preparations for the journey, which presumably include packing food and drink.

In chapter 6, references to food and its consumption again play many roles. The eat-or-be

eaten struggle between Tobiah and the large fish helps establish the liminal setting and instil a sense of drama. Tobiah's defeat of the fish serves as both a defeat of death (which is marked elsewhere with imagery linked to consumption) and a reordering of chaos. A key part of the reordering is Tobiah's cooking, eating, and salting of the fish (cf. traditions where chaos monsters are consumed as part of an eschatological banquet.) The heart, liver, and gall of the fish that Tobiah eats (the first two organs of which are particularly edible, though not in this story) are employed to banish Sarah's demon and cure Tobit's blindness. The sense of smell, which of course has a lot to do with enjoyment of food, is part of the mechanism involved in the expulsion of the demon in chapter 8. As to Tobit's blindness, one food-linked substance (gall) undoes the effects of another (the bird faeces) in chapter 11.

In chapters 7, 8, and 9 densely packed accounts of wedding linked meals serve very important functions. A welcoming meal illustrates hospitality, but even more importantly provides the occasion for Tobiah to get married. His refusal to eat or drink until after the wedding has taken place plays a crucial role. In this way, he parallels his father's delay in eating in chapter 2 and shows that he too has a proper sense of priorities. The extended wedding celebration reflects Tobiah's success in defeating the demon and the joy of his survival and perhaps of the fact that Sarah is no longer a serial widow. Both meals structure the narrative through the parallels in the details of their preparation. The account of how Raphael and Gabael find Tobiah reclining effectively illustrates how the celebration is still going strong. (A proposed wedding celebration is discussed in chapter 6, and an actual celebration in Nineveh is described in chapter 12 in Sinaiticus.)

Various forms of non-eating are present in chapters 10 and 12. Thinking her son is dead, Hannah does not eat, adding depth to the depiction of her sorrow and to the tension of the narrative (though this incident is not found in Sinaiticus). Fasting with prayer is a good thing to do, Raphael says during, a discourse on righteous behaviour. Furthermore, according to Raphael, Tobit's abandonment of his dinner has been specially noted. Raphael also comments on his own behaviour, insisting that he behaved as a good angel should and never really consumed anything. In addition, Raphael uses a verb meaning 'to feed' in Greek in as part of his statement about righteous behaviour.

Food is absent in chapter 3, which consists largely of Tobit and Sarah's prayers, along with a narrative concerning Sarah. Unlike Tobit, Sarah does not provide a litany of righteous deeds; at most she avoids sexual impurity. Chapter 13, which also largely consists of a prayer, also lacks any mention of food. Finally, there is no food in the chapter 14, which is mostly a testament, but does include instructions concerning burial and almsgiving.

## B. Thematic Summary

If the aim of the Book of Tobit is both to entertain and instruct, food is integral to both endeavours.<sup>847</sup> Key moments in the story are intimately connected with food and its consumption; some incidents consist of what a character does or does not do with food. For example, there is in Tobit's abandonment of his meal to attend to a dead body and his quarrel with Hannah over the goat. Tobiah's defeat and consumption of the fish that sought to eat his

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847. Richard I. Pervo, *Profit with Delight: The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

foot is another such moment. The welcoming meal that Tobiah delays in order to get married is yet another. Raphael's revelation that he never truly consumed whilst on earth is also given prominence. Even the bird dung and fish organs are linked to eating in some way.

The importance of food to the narrative is not merely in the (ample) presence of such references and their connection to the plot, however, food is central to the story. Especially in the accounts of Tobit's abandonment of his meal, Tobiah's struggle with the fish, and Tobiah's resistance to Raguel's invitation to eat, drink, and enjoy himself, there is a richness of texture for which the presence of food bears significant responsibility. The numerous details and slow pacing in these accounts build up the special quality of Tobit's Shavuot meal so that when Tobit quickly jumps up from it, we get a strong sense of high drama and frustrated anticipation. The sadness of the day comes out in the sadness with which he finally eats his meal. In short, Tobit's meal provides an essential backdrop for the entire episode. Tobiah's dramatic 'eat-or-be-eaten' struggle with the fish, in turn, draws upon a multitude of ancient symbolic ideas concerning death (which is often depicted as hungry), chaos monsters (who are said to be consumed in the end-time), and more. When Tobiah refuses to eat or drink until he is married, he not only echoes the servant sent to marry Isaac in Genesis 24, he also parallels his own father's delay in eating for the sake of a significant life-cycle activity, thus creating a structural link as well as yet another dramatic moment. Furthermore, the welcoming meal also sets up a series of correspondences with the fourteen-day-long wedding celebration to follow. The increase in both the amount of food and the length of the meal, compared to the first meal in Ecbatana highlights the significance of the latter occasion. Viewed together, both meals at Ecbatana provide crucial moments around which important

events such as the wedding, the expulsion of the demon, the consummation of the marriage, and the retrieval of Tobit's money can be structured. In addition to these obvious and prominent examples, it is arguable that food may play a more subtle role. An example of this is when Raphael returns with Tobit's relative Gabael and finds Tobiah reclining. The Greek verb used is the functional equivalent of saying that someone is dining. Thus an entire wedding party is evoked with just a single phrase, providing a general sense of realism while economically depicting Tobiah's precise location in space and time.

Just as food and its consumption are important to the narrative, the book uses what people do with food and drink to convey its message of how one should behave. Examples are in Tobit's litany at the beginning of the book of all the good deeds he has performed (a list that includes to his wish to share his meal with a poor Israelite and his abandoning of a meal for a higher purpose), the instructions Tobit offers his son in chapter 4, and the advice Raphael provides in chapter 12. Importantly, Tobit demonstrates his loyalty to YHWH (via the Jerusalem Temple) before the Exile through the payment of edible tithes, the remarkably detailed description of which takes up an enormous amount of space. After the Exile, he continues to demonstrate his loyalty to YHWH by avoiding 'the food of the Gentiles.' It is highly suggestive that both Tobit's payment of tithes and his avoidance of 'Gentile food' seem to all appearances to be at the rigorous end of the scale, judging by a range of relevant documents of various genres. It is through food that Tobit distinguishes himself from the fellow members of his tribe. For Tobit, feeding the hungry is all important; he speaks of doing so himself in chapter 1 and instructs his son to do so in chapter 4. Tobit's quarrel with Hannah, whatever its precise motivations, is notably set within the framework of food and its

consumption, when Tobit stresses that stolen items are not to be consumed. Tobit's instructions to his son include a warning against binge drinking and a declaration in favour of pouring wine (?) on the graves of the righteous. When Raphael commends Tobit not merely for attending to the body promptly but specifically for leaving his dinner, he not only stresses the importance of this righteous deed, he also underscores the fact that what one does with food is tightly linked with the carrying out of what the narrative considers to be a highly praiseworthy activity. Raphael also makes what is apparently a reference to the virtue of fasting with prayer (though this does not appear in Sinaiticus). It is also worth noting the many instances of various forms of non-eating in the story: Tobit's avoidance of Gentile food, Tobit's delayed dinner, Tobiah's delay of the welcoming meal, Hannah's fasting, the mention of fasting as a good practise, and Raphael's refraining from all forms of earthly nourishment.

### C. What If There Were No Food in The Book of Tobit?

Yet another way to bring home the significance of food for this story would be to follow the model of another famous story featuring an angel: Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*. In the film, Clarence the angel shows George Bailey (who, like Tobit, is suicidal) what the world would be like had George never existed. We shall now do likewise with food and its consumption in the Book of Tobit.

If there were no food in the Book of Tobit, there would hardly be much of a plot to speak of. Tobit would not become blind, because there would be no Shavuot meal, there would be no search for a guest, no subsequent discovery of a corpse and no bird-droppings. Thus, there

would be no death wish (or prayer) on the part of Tobit and accordingly, no reason for Tobiah to embark upon a journey to get his father's money. Tobiah would never meet Raphael and Sarah would never be cured of her demon problem.

Even if Tobiah did go on a journey, he would not get very far in terms of healing Sarah and Tobit. If the fish were not hungry, Tobiah would never have found the curative organs. Moreover, the organs themselves would not be available, because they too have links with food and its consumption. Yet supposing Tobiah did reach Ecbatana, organs in tow, he would not be able to marry Sarah on his own terms unless he refused to eat and drink. Furthermore, there would be no meals at all in the house of Edna, Raguel, and Sarah. Without a two-week wedding celebration, Tobiah's parents, especially Hannah, might be less worried.

Other elements in the plot that would be erased would be Ahiqar's support of Tobit as well as Hannah's support of Tobit that results in the unfortunate goat episode, itself containing many instances of food. Without the goat episode, moreover, Hannah would not ask the bitter question about the use of good deeds and Tobit would not get upset (and in the current form of Sinaiticus, wanting to die). There would be no travel rations, no meal by the Tigris, no wedding celebrations of any kind, in either discourse or action, no mention of fasting (either by Hannah, or in Raphael's remarks), and we would never have the pleasure of knowing of Raphael's dining habits whilst on earth. Structural correspondences, such as how Tobit and Tobiah both defer eating, would be erased and the use of meals as ways to divide up scenes would not be available.



Furthermore, without food in Tobit, many significant references to righteous or proper behaviour would be absent. Tobit's devotion to the Temple in Jerusalem would be skimpy without the prolonged account of his tithing practices. The only mention of dietary observances, considered important by so many scholars, would be gone, as well as both references to Tobit's feeding of the hungry. In particular, Tobit's double deferral of the Shavuot meal, even if the news of the body had somehow reached him by other means, highlights Tobit's ability to prioritise. Moreover, with food not involved in Tobit's action, Raphael would have to say something different when praising him in chapter 12. Without food, Tobit would have to express his overscrupulousness about the alleged theft of a goat in different terms other than with reference to eating stolen food. Furthermore, Tobit's testament would be fewer by four teachings, including a comment about putting consumable substances upon the graves of the righteous that sums up the story's interest in both being good to the dead and being good to the righteous. Raphael's instruction would also be reduced by three remarks, including a saying that praises almsgiving. Raphael's own virtue as an angel who keeps within the proper boundaries between heaven and earth would remain unexpressed to the full extent it would otherwise have been.

At yet another level, features that make the Book of Tobit such an interesting story would be gone. The rich detail and excitement of the Shavuot meal, expressing both joy and sorrow, would have to be eliminated, along with the joy linked to the wedding celebration in Ecbatana. The deep connection between power, sex, and death inferred in Raguel's invitation to 'eat, drink, and be merry' combined with his comments about how the previous seven husbands all died would be gone. Similar themes as presented by the framing of the

consummation of the marriage and demon's expulsion by meals would also be missing. Probably, however, the chapter to suffer the most in this respect by an absence of food would be the very centrepiece of the story in chapter 6. The heavy symbolism involving, again, power, death, arguably sex, chaos, and the liminal state that the chapter achieves would not be possible if food and its consumption were not intimately interwoven into it.

Although we have been somewhat circumspect regarding the analysis of character in the story, it would be difficult to deny that food imagery is important to such an enterprise. Tobit's scrupulousness and arguable self-righteousness would be less prominent in his narration without tithes, 'Gentile food', leaping from his dinner, and the infamous goat. Hannah is portrayed as a worrier earlier, but it is her activity involving her fasting that helps drive it home. Without food in Tobit, we would also have no Raguel the über-host, no Tobiah's showing initiative (or impatience), and less insight into whether Raphael was a perfectly good angel or not.

In addition, were we to banish food from this story, a good many echoes or allusions to the Hebrew Bible (and to a lesser extent, *Ahiqar*) would likewise vanish. For example, Tobit's modified quotation of Amos in the second chapter would be gone. The Jonah terminology in chapter 6 would be absent. Significantly, Tobiah's refusal to eat, echoing Genesis 24 would have to be taken out, as well as Raguel and Edna's preparations for the wedding celebration, which echo Genesis 18 would be gone. Other examples are certainly arguable as well, such as Raphael's non-eating and Judges 13.

Lastly, and perhaps ironically, an elimination of food in the story might even out the gender imbalance somewhat. To be sure, the teaching of Deborah (apparently about the feeding associated with the poor tithe) and the earnings of Hannah would have to be removed, but at least both men and women would not be depicted as eating anything. Nonetheless, we have demonstrated that altogether, whether from the standpoint of plot, structure, the theme of righteousness, and biblical allusions, food is so much a part of the fabric of the text that a Book of Tobit without food imagery would be simply unthinkable.

#### D. The Significance of the Variety of the Food Imagery

It is quite clear that food is essential to telling of the story of Tobit and to communicating the theme of righteousness, as well as specific deeds of almsgiving, tending to the dead, and perhaps even endogamy. At the same time, though, as this study has shown, there is an amazing variety of references to food in the Book of Tobit. It is no more possible to find a single symbolic meaning of food in Tobit than it is to reconstruct an original text, and probably even less so. In fact, it may not even be possible to label food and its consumption a motif or even a theme. For even when food is in what might be called the foreground of the narrative, it serves to advance the other themes already discussed or helps tell the story. This is nowhere more apparent than in the account of the welcoming meal, in which one reads of its preparation, the guests getting into a reclining position as they get ready to eat, the host's invitation to partake, the delay, the start of the meal, and at last its completion. Yet in all this, there is not a single image of food entering someone's mouth.

The variety of food in Tobit is directly connected to its subservient role. In the opening

speech when Tobit proclaims his righteousness by reciting his good deeds in general, good deeds involving food are prominent. In chapter 2 where all the attention is focused upon the attention Tobit is paying to the corpse, the abandoned meal highlights his good deed. In chapter 4 where Tobit instructs his son, there are no meals, but a return to advice about behaviour involving food and drink. In chapter 6, which expresses ancient themes of danger and liminality, food is richly symbolic. In Ecbatana, where marriage and demon dispersal rule the day (and night), the welcoming meal is tied to both events and the wedding banquet is a direct consequence.

It is probably no accident that the role of food in the story has not been much commented upon. This is not because previous interpreters produced poor readings. It is rather due to the chameleon quality of food, which is able to fit to the needs of the story at any moment, whether present in the background or the foreground. Also, interpreters would likely be hard pressed to categorise each instance of food within a coherent framework, beyond the two rough categories used here. Just how does one put together a hungry fish, an angel who doesn't eat, and a Shavuot dinner?

Tobit shows quite clearly that in literature references to food and its consumption may be considered a kind of privileged language. Like cursing with swear words, talking about food conveys far more than what one is literally communicating. It is a type of hyper language that is able to communicate a range of information in a manner that is not always linear, but instead evokes a range of cultural conventions, which can include emotional reactions. This is seen in the anticipation that is built up around both the Shavuot dinner and the welcoming

meal in Ecbatana. At the same time, like particles in Attic Greek, food can work 'grammatically' by creating structural parallels with other references to food. Examples of such parallels are Tobit and Tobiah's delays in eating; the two meals in Ecbatana; all three main meals together; the bird dung and the fish organs; and Tobiah eating the fish that tried to eat him. The ability of food to work in this way would seem to account for the Diane Sharon's conclusions, which were noted in the introduction. What must be emphasised, however, is that Sharon's dependence upon Proppian methods is not necessary to perceive the patterns that she observes. Indeed, although for the purpose of our analysis, we try to veer away from phrasing observations in terms of authorial intentionality, it would be fair to say that the food imagery in Tobit succeeds so well precisely because, aside from some structural usages here and there, there is no observable system to it.

## E. About the Book of Tobit as a Whole

Although this study has restricted itself to the subject of food, it inevitably contributes to wider questions about the book as a whole. These concern its Jewishness, its possible redaction, its date and provenance, its sources, its depiction of class and gender, and problem of authorial intention.

### 1. How a Story with Considerable Non-Jewish Material Can Be So Jewish

The Book of Tobit illustrates well how a story with so much non-Jewish material, indeed a story whose basic plot is not Jewish at all, still be so profoundly Jewish. As Tolkien has observed, it is the details that matter. It is worth keeping in mind, however, how many of the other practices relating to food in the Book of Tobit are not specific to Judaism: washing,

reclining, use of a small table, celebrating weddings with feasts, feeding the hungry, concern over drunkenness, pouring substances on graves, salting fish, the idea that immortal beings do not eat earthly food, and more. Of the chapters discussed above, those with the richest food imagery, (2, 6, 7, 8, and 9) contain considerable material that is not limited to Israelites or Jews. How, then, does food imagery render a story Jewish?

To be sure, details such as tithing, avoiding Gentile food, celebrating Shavuot with a meal, consuming kosher animals, and celebrating weddings with feasts in multiples of seven are explicitly Jewish practices. At a deeper level, some of the most significant moments in the story that involve food and eating clearly echo familiar stories from other sacred Jewish writings. Hannah's bread-winning reflects the Old Greek version of Job, at the very least. The swallowing fish recalls Jonah. The hosting of Tobiah and Raphael clearly reflects Genesis 18, just as Tobiah's delay of the meal so that he can get married corresponds with Genesis 24. Raguel's hospitality may recall Judges 19. Hannah's fasting resembles that of the Hannah of 1 Samuel. Raphael's non-eating may be connected with Judges 13. It is significant that so many of these important echoes, some of which we have noted above, are tied to food and eating.

A third way in which the Book of Tobit makes non-Jewish material its own is a complex manoeuvre in which material that is not specifically Jewish becomes so either by association with traditional Jewish material or through the evocation of broader concerns of Jewish narrative. Tobit's words about placing consumable substances on the graves of the righteous, which appears to derive from some version of *Ahiqar*, shows both processes at work at the

same time. When this saying is situated within the Jewish genre of testament, containing a range of traditionally (although not necessarily exclusively) Jewish instructions, such as advice concerning endogamy and *porneia*, it too takes on the Jewish coloration of its neighbours. At the same time, whatever else might be said about the actual prevalence of this practice among the Jews, this saying effectively embodies the story's major themes of respect for the dead, or the vindication of the righteous, and possibly even the importance of almsgiving.

## 2. Implications for Debates about Redaction

Having examined a fair amount of material in the story with an open mind on the subject of redaction, we have come to the conclusion that either a significant amount did take place, or that an author was trying to incorporate too many themes to permit a smooth narrative. We favour the first position, however. This study also demonstrates that whilst the conscious artistry associated with an individual author is demonstrable in the narrative, it appears to be more than likely that other hands were also involved. These are the reasons. To begin with, we know *a priori* that the development and shaping of material over time is quite common throughout antiquity, in epics, legal materials, liturgical texts, incantation series, and other forms of writing. Redaction is accepted unquestionably in the study of the Hebrew Bible, in the New Testament, and in Rabbinic literature. What, pray tell, is the objection to finding it in Tobit? This is especially the case given that throughout Tobit's transmission history we find so many versions that modify the text from what we know from Sinaiticus. It would seem that something about the story lent itself to an interest in altering it. In fact, we even see G2

differing from the DSS by the addition of a gloss.<sup>848</sup>

Our arguments in favour of redaction taking place, however, are based upon more than such general claims. They also go far beyond such classic arguments as shift in narration at 3:7 or problems with chapters 13 and 14.<sup>849</sup> Even contradictions involving Nadin (sometimes portrayed as good as in 11:18, sometimes portrayed as bad, as in 14:10) and various occasions of clumsiness in the narrative, although not insignificant, are not the clinching proof.<sup>850</sup> Such proof is instead to be found in contradictions or interruptions in the text that have some bearing upon Jewish practice and theology. In this way, we are adequately addressing the reasonable question of George W. E. Nickelsburg:

Can we impose modern standards of coherence and narrative flow on ancient texts? And if we wish to do so, does the alleged carelessness of the editor not suggest that an author, too, could be careless?<sup>851</sup>

It is not carelessness in and of itself that is the problem so much as ideologically - motivated messiness. For example, the passages about tithing and Gentile food are both inordinately lengthy compared to most of the other deeds described in chapter 1, and unlike the others they are not repeated in chapter 4. Moreover, tithing and avoiding Gentile food are especially Jewish practices, although tithing in Jerusalem is not appropriate for an Israelite like Tobit.

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848. See Chapter Three on the gloss about the festival of Shavuot.

849. See convenient discussion in Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 43 and recent argument by Wills, *Jewish Novel*, 85-88.

850. On the Ahiqar material, see recently, e.g. Rabenau, *Studien zum Buch Tobit*, 21 and Wills, *Jewish Novel*, 84.

851. George W. E. Nickelsburg, review of M. Rabenau, *Studien zum Buch Tobit*, *JBL* 116 (1997), 350.



One may also perceive a move away from the idea reflected in folklore (and the Talmud) that the monster/demon/serpent is somehow linked with the body of the afflicted woman, based on a comparison of the account of the first instance of removing the demon with the second and third such incidents. A similar demystification process may be taking place with respect to the use of gall for restoring eyesight. Another example occurs when Raguel urges Tobiah to eat and drink twice. In between the two requests Raguel asserts that only Tobiah, as the closest relative, has the right to marry Sarah. This idea, however, is in tension with other parts of the story and for this reason may be seen as a later addition. After all, how else can Raguel be depicted as willingly marrying off his daughter to seven men he knows will die, and why does he dig the anticipatory grave if he is so sure that this time will be different? These problems, among others pointed out in the Introduction, suggest that the theme of endogamy, at least as expressed in this extreme form, is a later development if not a sloppy development within the main narrative. In addition, the concern about whether Raphael truly ate or not is also worthy of further exploration, given that reports of angels refraining from eating but pretending to do so are usually associated with later writings. Moreover, Raphael's statement sits uneasily in its current context.

The above are just some examples of the questions raised by this examination of food in the Book of Tobit. They show that Tobit is a work full of tensions, and contradictory ideas about what is important and how to behave. This study has shown that the Book of Tobit was an organic developing entity, which grew upon the framework of the basic story. This suggests that it would be good to revisit the work already done by redaction critics such as Rabenau to further investigate such tensions and what implications they may have for the study of

ancient Judaism as a whole. In addition, we should keep in mind that there are a number of passages in which the narrative is perfectly capable of presenting a logical and linear unit, such as (for the most part) Tobit's Shavuot meal and Tobiah's struggle with the fish.

Finally, there is nothing shameful about redaction taking place. As Rabenau himself says of Tobit, "Die Erzählung gewinnt an Farbe, Spannung und auch einen besonderen Akzent, indem Leser und Beteiligte die Handlung aus unterschiedlichen Blickwinkeln erleben."<sup>852</sup> Rather, it is exciting to find a document with such a rich depository of multiple voices. It is in the narrative tensions that we can identify some of the pressing issues of ancient Judaism as a whole and perhaps some that are special to the Book of Tobit.

### 3. Implications for Debates About Date and Provenance

Given the indications that Tobit developed over time, one cannot date the work as a whole on the basis of a single feature. Likewise, one cannot point to any single element in Tobit such as avoidance of Gentile food, as a source of pre-Maccabean material that could help date other writings.<sup>853</sup> It is interesting that the tithing system described in Tobit closely resembles what Josephus describes, although this could be the result of common approaches to the Torah rather than a common date. In any case, one should allow time for Tobit's compositional development. This suggests pushing back the story to an earlier date of initial

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852. Rabineau, *Buch Tobit*, 26.

853. E.g. John J. Collins, *Daniel* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 142. Collins frames his point carefully, including with reference to Hos. 9:3-4 and Ezek. 4:13, but employs Tobit significantly as well.

composition. As for provenance, there is unfortunately no new solid evidence in favour of any particular location.

#### 4. Implications for Debates About Sources

As noted above, there is no doubt that the Book of Tobit draws upon the sacred Jewish writings in general and upon *Ahiqar* directly, in addition to drawing age-old fairy tale motifs, and ancient medical recipes. Among other instances, we have echoes of Genesis, Judges, 1 Samuel, Isaiah, and Jonah, and a verse that is very close to an *Ahiqar* saying about leaving a consumable substance on the graves of the righteous. Tob. 4:17. As to the question of whether the book consciously imitates the *Odyssey*, the evidence offered with respect to food, although occasionally suggestive, is not entirely convincing. At best, the purported parallels, depict typical rather than distinctive actions.

#### 5. Implications for the Study of Food, Class, and Gender

Food is also a valuable entry point for an analysis of class and gender issues in the story. It is the free males who are the eaters in the story. One sees that even though some females, including female slaves, are fairly vocal, the narrative in its present form has almost no interest in their eating and drinking. The one exception is Hannah's fasting (which is not found in Sinaiticus). This behaviour, which is not typical, consists of non-eating, and ultimately leads to a focus upon the male character Tobiah. Also effectively erased in the narrative are the presumed slave(s) involved with the preparations for the wedding banquet, who are not referred to with their own noun, just with a plural verb. This is even more so in

the instances of Tobit's Shavuot meal and the wedding celebration at Nineveh, in which the narrative is so distanced from the preparers that none are mentioned by name, not even Hannah. Raguel and Edna's division of labour, with its deliberate echoes of Genesis 18, places the man in charge of meat and the woman working with bread (at least literally) under her husband's orders. In this connection, with this story's interest in slaughtering animals for meat and in subduing and eating a large fish may be understood as the ultimate reflection of human domination of the natural world. This makes sense within the larger context of troublesome creatures including birds and a demon and may also be linked with the complex way that the existence and actions of the female characters in the story, especially Sarah, serve the larger needs of male characters in one way or another. One also finds that the story expresses the idea that feeding the hungry is one of several ways of helping poor people, even though this mechanism effectively keeps them in a dependent position.

## 6. Implications for the Problem of Authorial Intention

We have also seen a number of difficult passages for which there is no single satisfactory interpretation. These include to what extent Tobit's piety in chapter 1 is to be judged excessive, why exactly Tobit insists that Hannah has stolen a goat, and whether Hannah concern for her sons's safety is commendable or simply misplaced compared with Tobit's sometime confident attitude. Interestingly, there runs a common thread through each of these somewhat difficult passages. Each of the passages could either be interpreted with Tobit as properly scrupulous with faith in the Lord, or that he is self-righteous, out of touch with reality, and doesn't care enough for his son's well-being. That both interpretations are possible is to some extent the result of redaction, in that a mixed picture of Tobit results. A

lot may also depend on the cultural background of the interpreter as well as such concerns about character of any relevance to the story proper, but something else is at stake. It is also, as we discussed in the Introduction that at a certain level, claims about authorial intention are probably not the best way to express all that is being presented in the narrative. These and other problems in interpretation thus confirm that an emphasis on narrative, as opposed to authors and readers, allows the largest leeway and reduces dogmatism in interpretation by being comfortable with a *finite* number of readings.

## F. The Study of Food in Ancient Judaism

At last, we return to the subject of food in ancient Judaism, which was raised in the Introduction to this study. Clearly, Tobit's avoidance of Gentile food, and even his choice of whom he chooses to eat with, whilst certainly not unimportant, hardly captures the range, depth, and significance of food in the story. Yet these limited considerations have been the foci of much of the study of food in ancient Judaism. In dealing with documents such as the Book of Tobit, it is not enough to simply throw in a reference to sociology and exilic identity (a theme that notably is *never* stressed in the narrative of Tobit itself) and conclude that that is all there is to say. An in-depth literary analysis is absolutely essential, not because one is of the opinion that history does not matter, but to the contrary, because one is of the opinion that it does matter. One cannot evaluate an ancient account of a battle, a law collection, or a satire without respect to genre; in the same way, it is essential to evaluate the qualities of the Book of Tobit as a work of instructive fiction. This analysis has revealed that food is a fundamental building block in Tobit's mode of transmitting its story and its messages. This has major implications for the study of food in Judaism as a whole and in other ancient Jewish and

Christian writings. It has already been suggested that there may be a number of relationships between food and sex within Tobit. On the one hand, there is very little sex in the Book of Tobit, and that only for the purposes of procreation, but there is lots of food. On the other, Sarah's claim never to have been in a state of sexual impurity may parallel Tobit's claims about avoiding Gentile food. Conversely, in early non-Jewish Christianity, which eventually dispensed with the dietary laws, sexual asceticism was much more prominent. This is seen especially dramatically in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century Acts of the Apostles (e.g. *Acts of Andrew*, *Acts of Paul and Thecla*) which were written much later than the Book of Tobit but are similarly a form of popular fiction.

Food also offers a valuable lens through which to look at other documents. Take, for example, *Asenath*.<sup>854</sup> Much debate exists over the extent, to which this work is Jewish, if it is at all, and to what extent it is Christian, as well as where it was composed. An in-depth analysis of food and its consumption in *Asenath* would do more than explore Asenath's consumption of the honeycomb, the possibly christological and eucharistic significance of the bread of life, and the concerns about dietary regulations. It would also look at how she rejoices over the food her parents bring her (4:2); the large amount of olive oil linked with Joseph (5:6); the comparison of Asenath's breasts to apples (8:5)<sup>855</sup> and her hair to a vine with fruits (19:8); Joseph's eating and drinking (9); Asenath's fasting (10:2; 10:17; 11:1; 13:8; 15:3); her dramatic tossing of meat, fish, and wine out the window for strange dogs to eat

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854. Citations follow those of the so-called long version.

855. Although this is apparently a known classical image (Christopher Burchard, "Joseph and Asenath," *OTP* 2:211 note h), it is interesting to see it in the context of other agricultural imagery in the story.

(10:13; 13:7); the dinner prepared by Asenath's foster-father upon Asenath's orders (18:2, 5); her family's wedding celebration with eating, drinking and full-blown feasting (20:8-10); the fear of being swallowed by a sea monster (11:11); Asenath's statement that Joseph's wisdom caught her as if she were like a fish on a hook (21:21); and a lie about harvesting a vineyard (25:2). In addition, there is the matter of Joseph and his grain duties (1:2, 3:2, 4:7, 26:4), the distribution of which may have redactional implications. As in Tobit food in *Asenath* is definitely not of a piece. There does seem to be interest in agricultural prosperity as well as in very specific details of particular foods, and something of a liking for fruit. A comparison with 'Pagan' Hellenistic novels that link food with romantic love, such as the pastoral *Daphnis and Chloe*, might be helpful. With matters of gender in mind, one also sees that Asenath is able to have a healthy appetite for food, and even to order its preparation, yet is also able to engage in strenuous fasting, and seems to be eating with her parents and/or Joseph on some occasions. In any case, it would be interesting to put some of the better known and more widely discussed elements of the story within the context of these less reported ones as part of a analysis of the document in its final form.

## G. Final Conclusion

This commentary began with the aim of bringing to light an important side of the narrative of Tobit's that has been largely neglected. It has demonstrated clearly just how essential food imagery is to the story. In the course of the investigation, it has shown how food works in highly sophisticated and complex ways in ancient writings; it practically serves as a building block of the narrative. It is precisely the ability of food to serve in this kind of role, at the same time culturally specific and widely recognisable, that permits it to both create and cross

over boundaries.<sup>856</sup> Consequently, to investigate food in ancient Jewish documents is to study deeply held concerns, the complicated ways in which Jews negotiated their traditions with the cultures of the wider world, ancient Jewish perceptions of class and gender, and not least, Jews' expressions of their relationship to the divine (not merely in terms of obeying 'the law').<sup>857</sup>

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856. As noted in part by Levine, "Diaspora as Metaphor," 105.

857. As in Feeley-Harnik, *The Lord's Table*.



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